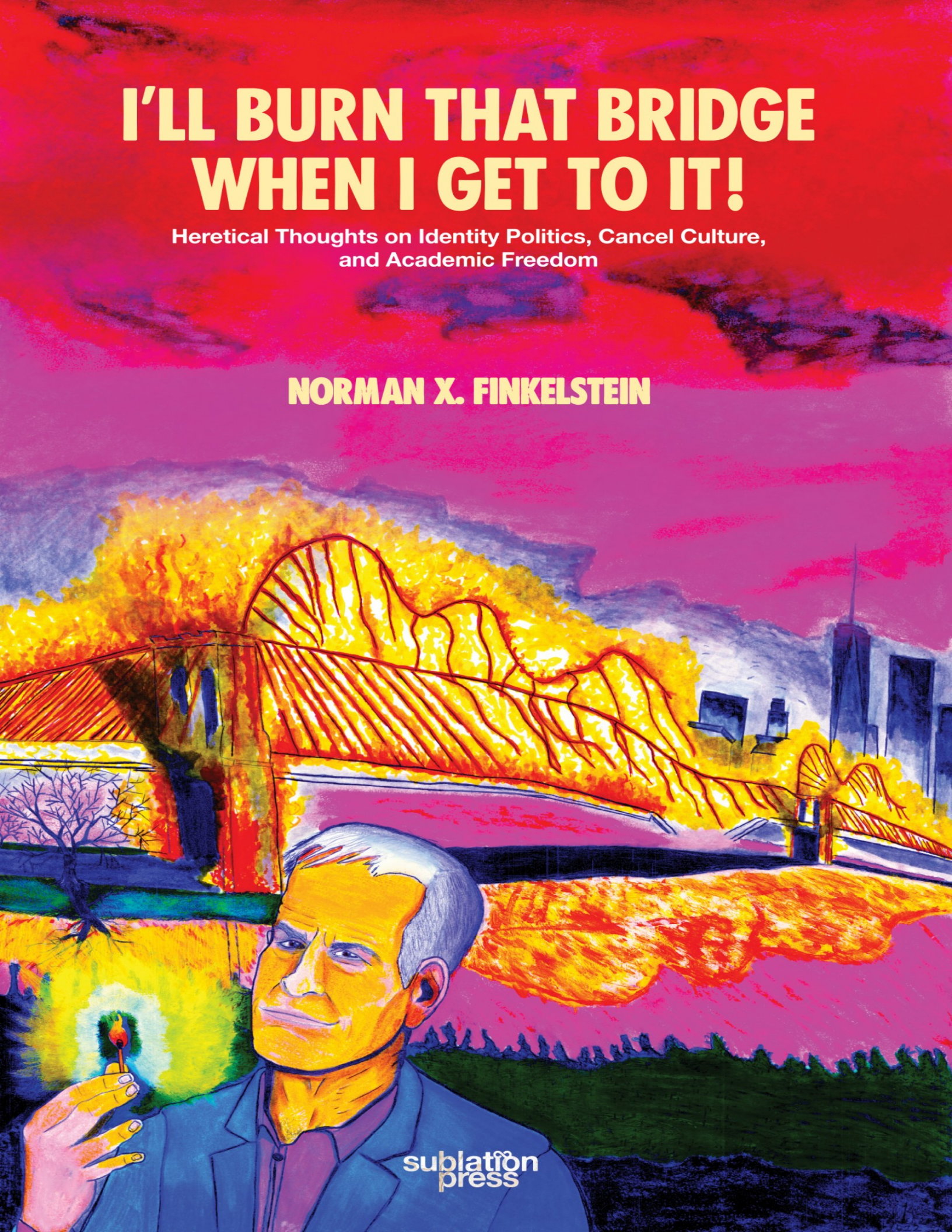
I'LL BURN THAT BRIDGE WHEN I GET TO IT!

Heretical Thoughts on Identity Politics, Cancel Culture, and Academic Freedom

NORMAN X. FINKELSTEIN



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To
Rudolph Baldeo
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Jonas Vognsen
My *partners in crime*

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I feel a real and solid pleasure when anybody points out a fallacy in any of my views, because I care much less about my opinions than about their being true.

—Bertrand Russell

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Foreword

The subject of this book is the current political moment in which identity politics, cancel culture, and academic freedom loom so large. The book itself originated in "A Letter on Justice and Open Debate" that *Harper's* published in 2020. The letter, signed by prominent public intellectuals across the political spectrum, decried the excesses of cancel culture. In the ensuing controversy, my name cropped up, not, however, as a victim of cancel culture but, it was said, of corporate culture. My publisher at the time proposed that I join the debate with a short book. He anticipated, it seems, that I would decry the hypocrisy of the decriers of cancel culture, many of whom, it might fairly be supposed, reacted with indifference (if not glee) to my own cancellation. Hypocrisy was rife, for sure. But the irrefragable fact remains that "woke" politics are intellectually vacuous and politically pernicious. I endeavor to demonstrate this in Part I by parsing the ur-texts of "woke" politics, and then by dispelling the dense mist that shrouds that ultimate "woke" product: the Obama cult. In Part II, I critically assess what's become an article of faith in "woke" culture: that in the classroom a professor should teach only his own and not contending viewpoints on a controverted question; that he shouldn't strive for "balance." The last chapter of the book situates my own cancellation in broader perspective. It would be miraculous were my ego so invincible that I didn't occasionally wonder whether my alleged incivility was valid grounds for denying me tenure and ultimately banishing me from academia. I therefore decided to probe, with the maximum judiciousness humanly possible, this question. If this book is laced with vitriol, that's because so much of "woke" culture deserves

contempt. If nonetheless a large amount of space is devoted to dissecting this nonsense, that's because it's not immediately obvious *why* it's nonsense. Where, on the contrary, a historical or contemporary figure is deserving of reverence, it is duly recorded, and where an argument contains genuine content, it is treated with the measure of seriousness it warrants. On a separate matter, to maintain the smooth flow of the text, I have loaded into the footnotes supplemental documentation as well as material of less interest to a general reader. Finally, a "trigger warning": professional advance comment on this book has in the main been savage. A Henry Holt & Company senior vice-president said of the manuscript: "There's altogether too much of everything in the book, too many digressions, too many quotes, too many illustrations, and most important too much score settling, often personal. So instead of an argument, there's a tirade; instead of an analysis, there's an attack." In another bilious response, famed revolutionary Tariq Ali of Verso panned the book as "incoherent" and "ineffective," and then, in a seemingly desperate plea, implored me for my "own good" not to "throw a tantrum and be tempted by self-publishing." It's as if Franz Kafka and Max Brod in reverse: I want to publish my book; they want me to burn it for my "own good." In any event, readers can decide for themselves whether the ensuing pages are devoid of argument, analysis, and coherence—or whether these rejection letters are just humdrum instances of cancel culture silencing too much *truth* when it touches too close to home.

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Part I

Identity Politics and Cancel Culture

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What is the object of writing the history of Reconstruction? Is it to wipe out the disgrace of a people which fought to make slaves of Negroes?... Is it to prove that Negroes were black angels? No, it is simply to establish the Truth, on which Right in the future may be built.

—W. E. B. Du Bois

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Chapter 1

Confessions of a Crusty, Crotchety, Cantankerous, Contrarian, Communist Casualty of Cancel Culture

Are you now or have you ever been…?

What's new about cancel culture?

Not as much as it might appear; but not so little either. Cancel culture is as old as culture itself. Every society establishes boundaries of what's acceptable. If one finds, or places, oneself on the wrong side of them, one gets cancelled. The mechanisms can be subtle—a polite rejection letter after submitting a "controversial" article to a scholarly publication—or quite brutal—a stint in a re-education camp or an assassination. Julien Benda, in *La Trahison des Clercs* (*The Treason of the Intellectuals*), posited that, if you're faithful to the values of Truth and Justice, it must inevitably come to pass that you'll be ostracized—or, in the current idiom, "cancelled"—by society: "A clerk who is popular with the laymen is a traitor to his office." He gestured to Socrates and Jesus.[1] A true clerk, according to Benda, accepts Jesus' dictum: "My Kingdom is not of this world." Had Benda lived longer, he could have added to his martyrs' pantheon Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, both of whom, it is now forgotten, were reviled at the time of their respective assassinations. Right after Malcolm X's death, the *New York Times* editorialized that "the world he saw through those horn-rimmed glasses of his was distorted and dark. But he made it darker still with his exaltation of fanaticism. Yesterday someone came out of that darkness that he spawned, and killed him." Who would've thunk the outré woke *Times* cancelled Malcolm X on his deathbed?[2] When Martin Luther King spoke out against the Vietnam War, fellow Civil

Rights Movement leaders denounced him for jeopardizing federal funding of the domestic War on Poverty. "What you're saying may get you a foundation grant," he retorted to one, "but it won't get you into the Kingdom of Truth."[3] On the night before his assassination, as if he had a premonition that the next day would be his last, King eerily delivered what turned out to be his own eulogy. It was perhaps the greatest political speech in recorded history, arguably surpassing in poignancy Pericles' oration as immortalized by Thucydides. The only possible rival to King among modern orators is Frederick Douglass, the pages of whose speeches to this day throb from his spoken words. In the last year before his assassination, King's biographers report, even his closest collaborators deserted him as they mocked his morbidity, while a Harris Poll found that King had a public *dis*approval rating of nearly 75 percent.

Most of my heroes and heroines growing up had fallen victim to cancel culture. In the mid-1930s, the awesomely gifted African-American Paul Robeson was, except for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the most famous American in the world. But after taking the wrong stand in the Cold War, Robeson was cancelled. His income plummeted, he couldn't rent a concert hall to perform, his name was whited out of sports records. "I met my brother the other day," Robeson would sing, "and gave him my right-a hand. / And as soon as ever my back was turned, he scandalized my name." The folksinger Pete Seeger was blacklisted on prime time until Johnny Cash and the Smothers Brothers forced higher-ups to allow him on their top-rated television programs. (Lee Hays, who performed with Seeger in The Weavers, famously quipped, "If it wasn't for the honor, I would just as soon not have been blacklisted.") Dr. Annette Rubinstein, who seamlessly embodied the unity of "theory and practice"—educated, cultured, but also a committed activist—was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee. To this day a half century later, I

still remember the subject matter of each of the five lectures she delivered when I was an undergraduate (Post–Cultural Revolution China, Marxist Literary Criticism, the 1968 New York City Teachers Strike, leftwing Harlem Congressman Vito Marcantonio, and the New Deal Federal Theater Project). She wore her erudition lightly. "A complete bibliography of the books read during the preparation of this work," she casually notes in the back pages of her two-volume study of English literature, "would include several thousand titles and would therefore be of little or no value to the reader." That's several thousand *books*, not tweets. Rubinstein ended up an itinerant speaker and writer in the service of leftwing causes. The upshot is, my generation grew up in the shadow of McCarthyism. Cancel culture was hardly alien to it. If the virulent strain of it had more or less passed, it still hovered in collective memory. We all knew someone who had been blacklisted, and the same fate occasionally befell still another victim. It was Angela Davis' membership in the Communist Party that triggered the witch hunt against her in the 1960s.

But to be effective, cancel culture doesn't require such crudities as a blacklist. On the contrary, it's more often than not effected with grace and aplomb. Professor Noam Chomsky popularized the phrase "manufacturing consent" to denote the mechanisms by which incongruous facts and opinions are filtered out in an ostensibly democratic society. His theoretical account was in some sense autobiographical. For decades, he himself was the most effectively cancelled intellectual in the United States. Even as he was in possession of a most remarkable mind, and even as his intellectual output was prodigious—antiwar clergyman William Sloane Coffin once rued, "Chomsky writes books faster than I read them"—his publications were ignored, he never appeared on news programs, and his opinions were never solicited. Chomsky's worst transgression was criticizing Israel. The *New York Times Sunday Book Review* was the

preeminent arbiter of literary taste. A favorable review made a book, an unfavorable one killed it. When Chomsky published his first book on the Israel-Palestine conflict, *Peace in the Middle East?* (1974), the *Times* recruited Michael Walzer, one of the signatories of the now-famous *Harper's* Letter deploring cancel culture, to cancel Chomsky. "Were it not for the place he has made for himself on the American Left," Walzer informed readers, "I doubt that any publisher would have accepted these articles in their present form." In other words, this book—and its author's opinions—could be safely ignored.[4] And so they were. When Chomsky later published his searing indictment *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (1983), it was such a hushed affair that hardly a U.S. periodical noticed it. Along the way, Chomsky was tarred with the cancelling epithets "Holocaust denier" and "self-hating Jew." One signatory to the *Harper's* Letter, Bari Weiss, was, until her flamboyant departure from the *Times* editorial page, the reigning Queen of Cancel Culture as she promiscuously hurled the epithet *antisemite* at any and all of Israel's critics. If the *Times* recruited Weiss, it wasn't because of her gifts, which, judging from her *oeuvre*, fell squarely on the deficit side of the ledger. Rather, it was to throw a bone to its readership base of Jewish billionaire *alte kakers*[5] on the Upper East Side of Manhattan who, unlike millennial Jews, still swore by their Holy State. The *Times* was forced by circumstance to open its pages to some harsher coverage of Israel, as its high crimes and misdemeanors could no longer be credibly dismissed, while its obnoxious head of state (Benjamin Netanyahu) had thrown himself into President Trump's waiting arms. So Weiss was charged with churning out shlock articles—singing paeans to Israel (and Jews) and ferreting out antisemites hidden in every nook and cranny—that warmed the cockles of *alte kaker* hearts. Incidentally, it is a staple of surveys on antisemitism to pose the question, "Do you think Jews believe they are superior to others?" An affirmative

response marks one off as an incipient antisemite. Meanwhile, Weiss, in the peroration to her diminutive opus, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*, offered this uplift to disconsolate Jews fending off homicidal antisemites at every turn while en route to Martha's Vineyard:

> We are a people descended from slaves who brought the world ideas that changed the course of history. One God. Human Dignity. The sanctity of life. Freedom itself. That is our inheritance. That is our legacy. We are the people commanded to bring light into this world.[6]

Isn't it blazingly obvious that, if you think Jews harbor a superiority complex, you must be an antisemite?

Ideally, cancel culture doesn't require external controls. Its norms are internalized; youthful radicals, so to speak, self-cancel as they negotiate the system. The most eminent Marxist economist of my generation was Paul M. Sweezy. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Sweezy attended Harvard College as an undergraduate where he was president of the *Crimson*, and later was the star graduate student in Harvard's economics department, his class including many future luminaries in the discipline. (His dissertation, *Monopoly and Competition in the British Coal Trade*, won top honors.) Anticipating that Harvard would deny him tenure, Sweezy instead founded in 1948 the socialist periodical *Monthly Review*. On a personal note, he was my first mentor, warmly encouraging me as I despaired after suffering a thousand blows to the ego in graduate school. In an interview later in life, Sweezy described the subtle functioning of cancel culture. Recalling the radical intellectuals of his own youth who eventually made their peace with the system, Sweezy, ever generous, ever gentle, did not begrudge them the drift rightwards as they capitulated to the pressures and allurements of conformity:

> For a lot of these people, and you can understand it, there was no real career to be made in the left movement. And there were many other careers to be made, the attractions were enormous, the possibilities in academia, the possibilities in government. [Robert] Solow [later a Nobel laureate in economics] and [Eric] Roll [later a

> major London banker] were almost paradigms of the kind of careers that were open to them. Very intelligent, bright radicals, who adjusted their politics to their jobs. It's a kind of opportunism in a way, and yet in these cases it wasn't crass or vicious. It was the kind of thing that the pressures of U.S. society make it extraordinarily difficult for a person to resist, especially if he doesn't have some independent means.
> You have to understand that I probably would have gone that way, too. I was fortunate in not having to depend on an academic salary. My father was a banker; as a matter of fact, he was the vice president of the First National Bank, which was one of the predecessor corporations to the Citibank now.…
> He wasn't very rich. He could have been but for the crash of 1929…, but [there was] enough to live on. That was necessary. In the United States, if you don't have access to a little surplus value, you know, you're not going to be able to play a really independent role in the intellectual environment. So I don't blame these people in any personal sense. I try to explain it and thank my lucky stars that I was able to escape those pressures, to which so many people succumbed.[7]

In short, covert conformity is the rule, while overtly coerced ideological conformity is the exception—it becomes redundant as everyone knows what it takes to succeed, while few experience more than passing qualms about submitting to it. "As a rule, by the time a man becomes a professor, he has been tamed, and has learnt the advantages of submission," Bertrand Russell, who taught in the U.S. during World War II, recalled. "Radicals … either surrendered and lapsed into listless cynicism, or stuck to their convictions and therefore abandoned the teaching profession."[8] After a while and to preserve self-regard, most professors probably *do* believe what it pays, or what they're paid, to believe. Indeed, it would appear that they're gifted with unique powers of adaptation. "For self-deception, you can hardly beat academics," evolutionary biologist Robert Trivers has written. "In one survey 94 percent placed themselves in the top half of their profession."[9]

Sweezy coined an expression capturing another facet of this self-censoring cancel culture that is as efficacious as it is elusive. If I might beg the reader's indulgence, I will illustrate it with a personal anecdote. Although not yet tenured at her university, W. once summoned the

courage to introduce me when I was speaking there. She later published a book on violent and nonviolent resistance in Palestinian politics. Her exhaustive endnotes cited everyone who had ever written anything on the topic. Except me, even though I had published more than a little about it. After reading the book, I sent her this email:

> Your book prompted this memory:
> Paul M. Sweezy was an eminent Harvard-trained economist.
> He was reputed to be the most brilliant student in his graduate school class. Paul Samuelson later described him as "the best that Exeter and Harvard can produce … and early established himself as among the most promising economists of his generation."
> Sweezy was also a committed Marxist.
> After leaving Harvard's economics department where he taught, Sweezy founded in 1948 *Monthly Review*, "an independent socialist magazine" (from the masthead), that kept alive the radical tradition during the barren years of the McCarthy era.
> In 1956, C. Wright Mills, another leftist, but tenured at Columbia University, published *The Power Elite*.
> In the course of an incisive review of the book, Sweezy mentioned that, although the themes in Mills' book frequently intersected with the subject matter of *Monthly Review*, Mills scrupulously avoided citing any articles from *MR*.
> Sweezy ascribed this prudence to "fear of guilt by citation."
> Sweezy has since passed from the scene, and is now largely forgotten.
> But to those of us who had the honor of knowing him, he will ever be an inspiration for his willingness to pay the price of his political beliefs, while also sustaining the most exacting intellectual standards.
> It seems you are off to a promising career.

She didn't reply.

* * *

The signatories of the *Harper's* Letter presumably had something else in mind, however, by cancel culture. Not State repression targeting members and fellow-travelers of a leftwing political party, but the assault led by leftwing activists in mostly cultural milieus targeting "reactionary" speech. This complaint is also not novel. In the not-so-distant past, a raft of best-selling rightwing screeds decried the

hijacking of higher education by *Tenured Radicals* (Roger Kimball, 1990) who had engineered *The Closing of the American Mind* (Allan Bloom, 1987) by foisting on America's naïve youth an *Illiberal Education* (Dinesh D'Souza, 1991). Like any good propaganda, this alarm did contain a kernel of truth. In the heady 1960s, college radicals had demanded that Arthur Jensen and William Shockley be cancelled after each published research purporting that the inferior intellectual performance of African-Americans was at least in part genetic. (Jensen's article appeared in *Harvard Education Review*; Shockley was a Nobel laureate in physics teaching at Stanford.) In later years, Richard Herrnstein (of Harvard) and Charles Murray posited this same possibility in *The Bell Curve* (1994), provoking another outcry from the Left that they be cancelled. One critical difference, however, is that now-fashionably-woke publications such as the *New York Times* back then gave a thumbs up to books of this genre. The *Times* reviewer concluded that "*The Bell Curve* makes a strong case that America's population is becoming dangerously polarized between a smart, rich, educated elite and a population of unintelligent, poor and uneducated people," and "a large proportion of this emergent underclass is black."[10] The reviewer even managed to tease out something redemptive in a kindred volume by one J. Philippe Rushton, the thesis of which went like this: different races adapted differently to their original environments; "Negroids" reproduced at a high rate but didn't nurture their offspring, whereas "Caucasoids" reproduced at a low rate but did nurture them; the biology and anatomy of each race adapted to its respective reproductive strategy; hence, male "Negroids" might be endowed with larger "genital size" than "Caucasoids," but they're also commensurately dumber. This news must have evoked a compensatory sigh of relief from *Times* readers (at any rate, the males among them). The reviewer reported that "Mr. Rushton is nevertheless regarded by many of his colleagues

as a scholar and not a bigot." Lest a residue of doubt remained, he quoted in Rushton's defense … Herrnstein and Murray.

Besides real and alleged racists, the most frequent targets of cancel culture on college campuses back then were certifiable war criminals. During the U.S. aggressions in Vietnam and then Central America, radicals sought to prevent U.S. government officials—a Henry Kissinger or a Jeane Kirkpatrick—from speaking. In my opinion, the fact that they had actual blood on their hands raised distinct, discrete considerations. I still remember the powerful effect that Seymour Hersh's *The Price of Power* (1983) had on me: virtually each and every one of its 700 pages drips with blood as scores or more of innocents—in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East—perish due to Kissinger's direct orders. When four American-born Catholic missionaries were raped and murdered by the U.S.-backed regime in El Salvador in 1980, Jeane Kirkpatrick, one of President Reagan's top foreign policy advisors, told a reporter, "The nuns were not just nuns. The nuns were also political activists."[11] Asked if she thought the Salvadoran government had been involved, Kirkpatrick said, "The answer is unequivocal. No." In fact, the answer was unequivocal: Yes. It's hard for me not to personalize this dilemma: How would I react were one of the former guards in the death camp where my parents were interned and their families martyred invited to "present the other side" at my university? If there's something to be said for respecting the memory of the dead, then doesn't this speaker's presence constitute a brazen act of desecration akin to vandalizing a gravesite in broad daylight? Even allowing that reasonable people can disagree on this point, it's emphatically not a gray area whether a university community has the right—or, indeed, obligation—to choose a *commencement speaker* who's not a war criminal. Former president Barack Obama, who can always be relied upon for the bone-headed platitude, chastised members of Rutgers University after they opposed

the selection of Condoleezza Rice to speak at graduation. "If you disagree with somebody," he patronized, "bring them in and ask them tough questions." The art of law is teasing out subtle distinctions between situations that prima facie resemble each other. Obama taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago. Yet he appears constitutionally unable to distinguish between a graduate seminar and a commencement address, where the speaker is expected to embody values that will inspire and guide students as they embark on the next leg in life's journey. It is conceded, however, that Rice would have been a splendid choice had she been asked to deliver the convocation address at Mongol Hordes U.

After the Vietnam War wound down, most of these fringe leftwing protests were sporadic and evoked little sympathy from the broader university community. Both administrations and faculties were generally hostile to such infringements on free speech. The precincts of cancel culture multiplied, however, as "The Left" came to incorporate—well beyond the traditionalists waging class struggle, as well as fighting imperialism, racism, and sexism—*identity politics* and *political correctness*.[12]

Identity politics

Identity politics is not a new phenomenon. At its core, it is about representation: a competition *within* the group as to who best exemplifies it, and a competition *between* the group and the broader community as to the former's legitimate claims for greater representation in the latter. The fault line in the intramural competition comes down to this: Does one's ethno-racial identity possess a vital essence to be protected and preserved, or is it a fluke of nature that was instrumentalized to oppress and, in an ideal world, could potentially be eradicated as a social marker? The protagonists on either side might surprise. Frederick Douglass was cancelled by the

Afrocentrics of his day for *lacking* in Black pride. In fact, he did eschew the valorization of one's Blackness and preached the virtue of transcending it. In a lyrical passage worth quoting at length, Douglass lent expression to a now decidedly unpopular sensibility:

> We hear, since emancipation, much said by our modern colored leaders in commendation of race pride, race love, race effort, race superiority, race men, and the like…. In all this talk of race, the motive may be good, but the method is bad. It is an effort to cast out Satan by Beelzebub. The evils which are now crushing the negro to earth have their root and sap, their force and mainspring, in this narrow spirit of race and color, and the negro has no more right to excuse and foster it than have men of any other race. I recognize and adopt no narrow basis for my thoughts, feelings, or modes of action. I would place myself, and I would place you, my young friends, upon grounds vastly higher and broader than any founded upon race or color. Neither law, learning, nor religion, is addressed to any man's color or race. Science, education, the Word of God, and all the virtues known among men, are recommended to us, not as races, but as men…. It was not the race or the color of the negro that won for him the battle of liberty. That great battle was won, not because the victim of slavery was a negro, mulatto, or an Afro-American, but because the victim of slavery was a man and a brother to all other men, a child of God, and could claim with all mankind a common Father, and therefore should be recognized as an accountable being, a subject of government, and entitled to justice, liberty and equality before the law, and everywhere else…. You know that, while slavery lasted, we could seldom get ourselves recognized in any form of law and language, as men. Our old masters were remarkably shy of recognizing our manhood…. They called a man, with a head [of hair] as white as mine, a boy. The old advertisements were carefully worded: "Run away, my boy Tom, Jim or Harry," never "my man."… We should never forget that the ablest and most eloquent voices ever raised in behalf of the black man's cause, were the voices of white men. Not for the race; not for color, but for man and manhood alone, they labored, fought and died. Neither [Wendell] Phillips, nor [Charles] Sumner, nor [William Lloyd] Garrison, nor John Brown, nor Gerrit Smith was a black man. They were white men, and yet no black men were ever truer to the black man's cause than were these and other men like them. They saw in the slave, manhood, brotherhood, and womanhood outraged, neglected and degraded, and their own noble manhood, not their racehood, revolted at the offence…. My position is, that it is better to regard ourselves as a part of the whole than as the whole of a part. It is better to be a member of the great human family, than a member of any particular variety of the human family. In regard to men as in regard to things, the whole is more than a part. Away then with the nonsense that a man must be black to be true to the rights of black men. I put my foot upon the effort to draw lines between the white and the black, or between blacks and so-called Afro-Americans, or to draw race lines anywhere in the domain of liberty. Whoever is for

> equal rights, for equal education, for equal opportunities for all men, of whatever race or color—I hail him as a "countryman, clansman, kinsman and brother beloved."[13]

(Those busy toppling imperfect idols might be distraught to learn that not even Douglass could pass muster as he uttered the most appalling things about Native Americans.) Paul Robeson, who had one foot firmly planted in the African-American struggle and the other in the international struggle of the working class, finessed the seeming contradiction by proclaiming that each facet of his bifurcated identity enhanced the other: "Even as I grew to feel more Negro in spirit…, I also came to feel a sense of oneness with the white working class, people whom I came to know and love."[14] Eminent African-American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois, a contemporary and comrade of Robeson's, expressed a cognate feeling as he set foot in Europe to discover what he perceived as a world free of race prejudice: "On mountain and valley, in home and school, I met men and women as I had never met them before. Slowly they became, not white folks, but folks. The unity beneath all life clutched me. I was not less fanatically a Negro, but 'Negro' meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and world fellowship."[15] And while African-American militants in the 1960s preached that Black is Beautiful, Martin Luther King, Jr., in a most un–identity politics formula, famously embraced the ideal of being judged by the "content of one's character, not the color of one's skin."[16]

The politics of identity played out inside the Jewish community as well. In *Antisemite and Jew* (1946), Jean-Paul Sartre famously divided Jews into two categories: "inauthentic" and "authentic." The inauthentic Jew takes "flight" or abstracts from the concrete reality of his situation as he "tries to bring men together by uncovering … universal truths on which they could all reach agreement," and "espouses a conception of the world that excludes the very idea of race." Whereas "the authentic Jew *makes himself a Jew* [Sartre's

emphasis], in the face of all and against all. He accepts all, even martyrdom, and the antisemite, deprived of his weapons, must be content to yelp at the Jew as he goes by, and can no longer touch him." If the phrase "makes himself a Jew" seems enigmatic (try as I did in my youth, I couldn't make heads or tails of it), that's perhaps because (as I realized later) it's just Sartrean bloviation, put in italics to conceal its hollowness. At all events, every *au courant* Jew now set out to be authentic. Michael Walzer reinvented the notion of authenticity as "connection."[17] A connected social critic privileged his "own" people in the moment of truth. Thus, if Walzer heaped praise on Albert Camus, who was a *pied noir* (French-Algerian), it was because Camus refused to condemn France's ruthless colonial war in which some 1.5 million Algerians were killed. Upon receiving the Nobel Prize in literature, he was hectored by an Algerian as to why he didn't denounce France's repression. Camus (as quoted by Walzer) interposed, "I love justice, but I will defend my mother above justice." Alas, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir didn't fare very well by this moral calculus, as Walzer castigated the both of them for attaching *equal* weight to a French life as an Arab life during the Algerian war. He deplored Rosa Luxemburg as well—her sin being that, although Jewish, "her heart was equally open to everyone's sorrows."[18] I remember a cartoon in a humor magazine depicting an elderly Jewish couple sitting in front of a television set, on the screen of which was a mushroom cloud from an atomic blast. The caption read: "*Nu*, is it good for the Jews?" For the likes of Walzer, that question, far from self-parody, was, *literally*, the litmus test of connection. Is it such a far leap to recall that a core component of Nazism was the identity politics of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil)—i.e., race pride "rooted," as Alex Haley celebrated in his 1970s blockbuster, in one's ancestral home? The point then being, although typically located on the left end of the political spectrum, identity politics fits just as snugly on the other end.

The claims of identity politics on the broader community largely reduce to underrepresentation. The "canon wars" that erupted in academia, and to which *The Closing of the American Mind* et al. were largely a response, centered on the overwhelming predominance of white males—or, as it was put back then, Dead White European Males (DWEM)—in the curriculum of the Humanities. It was purported that this disparity resulted in a double harm: the victims were robbed of top honors in the arts and letters, while society at large was robbed of the "diversity" of their experiences. It would be foolish to deny that a homogeneously white male Great Books reading list can often be traced back to some alloy of personal bigotry and structural inequity. A pair of aspiring Ivy Leaguers in my high school class took up tennis and golf. "If all the top tennis and golf players are white," they enlightened me, "that's because these sports require intelligence." But it might also have been because management and coaches were racist and, several degrees removed, so few tennis courts and golf ranges could be accessed by depressed communities. If a Jewish applicant to medical school is said to perform better on the interview than an African-American, it might not only be because the interviewer is a dyed-in-the-wool racist, but also because, in the prevailing cultural ambience, whereas an African-American must prove he's smart, a Jew has only to prove that he's not stupid.

Still, even acknowledging these forms of structural racism, the presumption of guilt where representation is disproportionate can be myopic. Other factors plausibly come into play. If a top-tier basketball team is all Black, it obviously doesn't betoken racism but, rather, is testament to the unique place this sport occupies in the African-American community.[19] Likewise, if the top high school in New York, Stuyvesant, is 75 percent Asian, it traces back in part to institutional racism,[20] but it might also trace back in part to "Tiger Moms" who, like proverbial "Jewish mothers," dole out their maternal love pro rata

with the number of A's on their child's report card. An acquaintance in publishing rued that, in the midst of the Black Lives Matter protests, he couldn't find a single Black author on his backlist to reissue. Was that proof positive he was a racist deserving to be cancelled—or maybe it was that, as he ran a leftwing press on a shoestring budget, he couldn't attract Black writers, so in demand, if the best advance he could offer was in the high double digits?

Further, even were it true that disproportional representation always springs from the disease of racism, it's not obvious that instant, unearned and—dare it be said?—undeserved representation is the right cure.[21] To be sure, it can't be disputed that, if African-American writers of the first rank don't figure in curricula, racism is to blame. It is frankly a scandal—not least because the Nazi holocaust is Germany's burden, whereas slavery is *ours*—that, in my day and unto the present, Anne Frank's diary has been required reading in middle school, whereas Frederick Douglass' slave narrative never was and still rarely is. Justice cannot brook any delay in rectifying this absurdity. But what if a book is *not* of the first rank? In an era when his conviction was held by only a tiny minority, John Stuart Mill asserted the full intellectual equality of women. If history recorded so few female geniuses, he maintained, it wasn't because they had been overlooked by sexist gatekeepers but rather because in the distant past, when "great and fruitful new truths could be arrived at by mere force of genius, with little previous study and accumulation of knowledge," women had been banished from the life of the mind, while in his day, as women were just entering intellectual domains, genius required mastery of the accumulated knowledge of the ages:

> Nearly all the thoughts which can be reached by mere strength of original faculties, have long since been arrived at; and originality, in any high sense of the word, is now scarcely ever attained but by minds which have undergone elaborate discipline, and are deeply versed in the results of previous thinking.… Every fresh stone in the edifice has now to be placed on the top of so many others, that a long process of climbing, and of

> carrying up materials, has to be gone through by whoever aspires to take a share in the present stage of the work…. When women have had the preparation which all men now require to be eminently original, it will be time enough to begin judging by experience of their capacity for originality. (*The Subjection of Women*)

However, even as he pointed up the structural impediments to female genius, it's most improbable that Mill would have supported dumbing down the canon with mediocre thinkers or, worse still, cancelling first-rate thinkers and substituting second-raters in the name of diversity. "My advice to anyone who wishes to write," his godson, Bertrand Russell, recommended, "is to know all the *very* best literature by heart, and ignore the rest as completely as possible" (his emphasis).[22] Granted, it's not always obvious what comprises the "very best"—Tolstoy harbored a low opinion of Shakespeare, while Faulkner and Hemingway harbored low opinions of each other. But it's painfully obvious that, in newfangled "studies" programs that specialize in a smorgasbord of sexualities and an infinite regression of ethnicities, many of the required texts come closer to the ghastly worst. A brilliant, cultured undergraduate at Edinburgh told me that he learned the hard way to avoid like the plague any course offering with the word "studies" in it.

I was once sitting in Edward Said's office when he blurted out, "Chomsky's a racist." Why? I wondered aloud, in more than slight embarrassment. "He doesn't cite Arabs in his publications criticizing Israel." But, apart from the obvious debating advantage of quoting Jews against Israel, it could have been that the Jewish scholarship *was* of higher quality. If the objective is to convince, and the stakes are literally life and death, shouldn't one quote the most effective sources, even if Jews are disproportionately represented in the footnotes? Identity politics would undoubtedly say No. But wouldn't Palestinians under the heel of Israel's occupation themselves prefer that the most compelling case be made on their behalf, even at the expense of Palestinian representation in the scholarly apparatus? Ironically, on

another occasion, Said commended a forensic evisceration by me of Israeli historian Benny Morris. He then queried if I had read an article by a prominent Palestinian historian on the same subject. When I said yes, he cut me short. "Not good, eh?" Said is a curious figure in the annals of identity politics. In the heady days of Third Worldism, one's political credibility was largely a function of one's "authenticity," which signified racial purity and rootedness; hybrid identities were looked at askance. At one point in a book written in the 1980s (*After the Last Sky*), Said gingerly explored his *fellahin* roots, only to abruptly break off with the acknowledgement that, really, he had none. It briefly got him in some trouble as, to this end, Said somewhat exaggerated here and there the amount of time he actually spent in Palestine growing up. (Said's family had relocated to Cairo before his birth; he was only born in Jerusalem because it was home to the best hospital in the region.) When Third Worldism faded, and Said's own moral horizons expanded, he discovered the virtues of not being quite at peace anywhere—or, as he put it in the title of his bittersweet memoir, of being *Out of Place* (2000).[23] By the end of his life's journey, Said was in open rebellion against identity politics as he joined with the Argentinian-Israeli Jewish pianist Daniel Barenboim to found the *West-Eastern Divan Orchestra*, which self-consciously transcended tribal markers as it was composed of young Arab and Israeli musicians. To an observer from afar (I did not know Professor Said at all well), it appeared that his identity politics phase did enrich him as a human being,[24] and he did hone a shrewd political sense in those years. He was dead right on the Oslo Accord against the legion of hand-clappers on the White House lawn when it was signed (although implored to attend, Said refused), and he was dead right on the Iraq war against his deriders such as the essential dandy Christopher Hitchens, who patronized Said's putatively naïve "political judgment." Nonetheless, identity politics was an aberrant interlude in his trajectory, as he

eventually returned to his cosmopolitan source, still faithful to Palestine and never ashamed, although—its representation having been usurped and shrunken by a tin-pot dictator surrounded by sub-mediocre flunkies—he was henceforth less aggressively proud of being Palestinian; while, no longer constricted and constrained by The Cause, able as he now was to rise above (without severing his link to) it, he breathed easier in a more capacious moral universe than that imposed by his insular tribal identity.[25]

But what about the importance in a democratic society of hearing out the "voices" of "silenced" racial and sexual minorities? This concern was central to the landmark affirmative action case, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, argued before the Supreme Court in 1978. Allan Bakke sued the California Board of Regents alleging that he had been denied placement in a medical school's incoming class because it reserved spots for less qualified minority applicants. In its ruling,[26] a Court majority rejected the legitimacy of a program benefiting a particular group "merely because of its race or ethnic origin" or vaguely aimed at "remedying ... the effects of 'societal discrimination.'"[27] It did, however, acknowledge that an institution could derive benefits from the presence of racial minorities as they bring "experiences, outlooks, and ideas that enrich the training of its student body."[28] On this but only this ground, the Court upheld the legitimacy of "taking race into account as a factor" (but not quotas per se) in admissions decisions. But wasn't the Court's decision itself grounded in, if not a racist, then still a racialist assumption? Affirmative action relies on generic racial categories, but unless each generic category intrinsically correlates with distinct "experiences, outlooks," etc., those admitted under it don't necessarily bring anything beyond themselves to the mix. In other words, unless one's racial or sexual identity double-dyes every subjective aspect of one's being, then one's own opinions are indicative of no more than ...

one's own opinions.[29] There's manifestly no single "Black perspective" on homosexuality or "woman's perspective" on abortion. There's not even a "Jewish perspective" on the Nazi holocaust, as some survivors reached the epiphany Never Again *to anyone* while others reached the epiphany Never Again *to Jews*. Or, although they may both be self-consciously Jewish, how much in particulars do Bernie Sanders and Benjamin Netanyahu agree on? Recoiling at the notion of a "gay community," the writer Gore Vidal exclaimed, "What in God's name do Eleanor Roosevelt and Roy Cohn have in common?" Even were it true that African-Americans in general harbor stronger feelings than Whites about racist cops, and women in general harbor stronger feelings than men about male violence, it still remains that the "representative" Black or "representative" woman admitted under an affirmative action program won't necessarily reflect those majority sentiments, while the majority sentiment in a group doesn't necessarily translate into a single policy preference. Not every Black person appalled by police brutality supports the slogan "Defund the police." In other words, the demand for proportional representation on the grounds that it gives expression to the silenced voices of oppressed *groups* does not withstand scrutiny. Each concrete, personal stand-in for the oppressed group can only speak as a group *member*, whose "experiences, outlooks, and ideas" are his or her own, refracted through his or her irreducible individuality, and are at most, and only by serendipity, representative of the plurality opinion of the group.

Ironically, the Supreme Court peremptorily dismissed the rationale for affirmative action that most compels: promoting a group "merely because of its race or ethnic origin."[30] A Black or female presence in professions hitherto dominated by white men does provide—however much a cliché, it's nonetheless true—a "role model" that will inspire others to aspire, until the wall of racism crumbles down. "In order to get beyond racism," Justice Blackmun famously observed in his *Bakke*

opinion, "we must first take account of race." It's hard not to notice many more young African-American women on tennis courts since Serena Williams' breakthrough. And even if beneficiaries of affirmative action lack qualifications, they will learn the ropes to the benefit of the next generation. African-American graduates of the Ivy League now know that, like white middle-class parents, they must shop around for the best neighborhood schools, SAT prep courses, etc. to secure their children's future. The learning gap between races will thence gradually close so that the next generation is, if not yet fully equipped to compete in the Ivy Leagues, closer to the threshold. It must also be said, however, that the most galvanizing role models are the ones who *earned* their way to the peak of their respective professions. It's hard to conceive that Jackie Robinson, Arthur Ashe, Tiger Woods or Williams would have so inspired if they weren't at the top of their game, and indeed, hadn't beaten whites at their own game and according to their own rules, with no artificial boosts. If Robeson commanded the respect of even diehard white racists, it's because his stupendous attainments in sport, scholarship, and culture could not be disputed or denigrated. It could not be said he was given a leg up; on the contrary, despite a system undisguisedly rigged against African-Americans, throwing obstacles, sometimes brutal, in his way every step of the way, he succeeded by dint of his preternatural gifts, disciplined application, and a determination, imparted by his father, not to accept second best to *anyone*. In his characteristically modest biographical sketch, Robeson recollected that from his father

> we learned, and never doubted it, that the Negro was in every way the equal of the white man. And we fiercely resolved to prove it…. He firmly believed that the heights of knowledge must be scaled by the freedom-seeker. Latin, Greek, philosophy, history, literature—all the treasures of learning must be the Negro's heritage as well. So for me in high school there would be four years of Latin and then in college, four more years of Latin and Greek. Closely my father watched my studies and was with me page by page through Virgil and Homer and the other classics in which he was well grounded.[31]

Douglass, whom Robeson acclaimed as "our greatest hero and teacher," and whom W. E. B. Du Bois hailed as "the greatest of American Negro leaders,"[32] ascended such summits of composition and oratory that white Abolitionists counseled him to keep to a "simple narrative," as his audiences upon hearing him doubted he could ever have been a slave. Douglass himself, in one of his most famous speeches, preached the virtues of "self-made men … who, under peculiar difficulties and without the ordinary helps of favoring circumstances, have attained knowledge, usefulness, power and position…, who are not brought up but who are obliged to come up, not only without the voluntary assistance or friendly cooperation of society, but often in open and derisive defiance of all the efforts of society and the tendency of circumstances to repress, retard, and keep them down."[33] His most recent biographer, David Blight, notes the "paradox in Douglass's thought" is that "he never stopped arguing that the legacy of slavery would require federal aid to the freedpeople, but he also never surrendered his commitment to a fierce individualism."[34]

Even if—per Douglass on his better days, and the liberal agenda in general—it's agreed that social inequities will persist and even be exacerbated absent massive government investment in jobs and infrastructure, it's still hard to make out how, per the liberal agenda, the mechanical, token practice of group representation via affirmative action will benefit the disadvantaged group, excepting this or that fortunate member of it who lands the coveted position, and this or that bystander who is inspired, if just barely, by the ersatz achievement. An attainment on these quota terms will also not expunge the group's doubts of self-worth, the internalized, self-directed racism of the broader society.[35] The reverse side of the coin is that, in the words of the Supreme Court, "preferential programs may only reinforce common stereotypes holding that certain groups are unable

to achieve success without special protection based on a factor having no relationship to individual worth." Racial set-asides stigmatize and diminish the beneficiary in the eyes of others, which is why a minority candidate competing for entry into a top school will occasionally make a public point of opting out of the affirmative action pool. It's also true, however, that even the "self-made" achievers—the Douglass or Robeson, Du Bois or Alain Locke—won't, even as they chip away at racism, in and of themselves wholly eradicate it, as they'll be mentally compartmentalized by whites as "exceptions to the rule." The academic endeavors to prove the genetic equality of the races also do not go very far. The discipline is highly technical, impenetrable to the layperson. I still recall Stephen Jay Gould's attempt in *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981) to make factor analysis accessible. It went over this reader's head leaving only a headache behind. It's of course preferable that the field of genetics not be wholly ceded to exponents of "race science," but, excepting technicians, the proofs only persuade those who have already been persuaded. In other words, such proofs haven't actually persuaded but, on the contrary, have been harnessed in support of preexisting prejudices, true and noble prejudices perhaps, but prejudices nonetheless for they were arrived at prior to and independent of the proof. "Truth, thus held," to quote Mill, "is but one superstition the more, accidentally clinging to words that enunciate a truth." To eradicate racism, its falsity must be demonstrated *in practice* and en masse. A critical mass of concrete achievement must be reached such that the invidious group stereotype no longer withstands scrutiny. A lamentable illustration comes by way of Israel. In the modern world, the "Jew" conjured the image of a cerebral, scrawny nebbish. Woody Allen. It took Israel's fighting prowess to shatter this stereotype. Indeed, Israel has proven such a "success story" at inflicting death and destruction, murder and mayhem, that, conjoined with its race-supremacist ideology, the

putative Jewish state is now the envy of the historically fascist and antisemitic global alt-right.[36]

Political correctness

The *woke politics* underpinning cancel culture is a reinvention of what used to be called *political correctness* or p.c. Already *thirty years ago*, Richard Bernstein, in an ominously titled article, "The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct," on the front page of the *New York Times* News of the Week in Review, warned that

> there is a large body of belief in academia and elsewhere that a cluster of opinions about race, ecology, feminism, culture and foreign policy defines a kind of "correct" attitude toward the problems of the world, a sort of unofficial ideology of the university.… Central to p.c.-ness, which has roots in 1960s radicalism, is the view that Western society has for centuries been dominated by what is often called "the white male power structure" or "patriarchal hegemony." … But more than an earnest expression of belief, "politically correct" has become a sarcastic jibe used by those, conservatives and classical liberals alike, to describe what they see as a growing intolerance, a closing of debate, a pressure to conform to a radical program or risk being accused of a commonly reiterated trio of thought crimes: sexism, racism and homophobia.[37]

To quote the ever-quotable solecism of New York Yankees catcher Yogi Berra, "it's déjà vu all over again." A cottage industry has sprung up that chronicles the various horrors—some real, some imagined, some selectively reported[38]—that have been committed on college campuses in the name of political correctness.

It must first be acknowledged, emphatically so, that societal attitudes toward sexual, racial, and ethnic minorities have changed markedly for the better, in particular among young people. They register a civilizational advance, a cultural tectonic shift, in which we as a society can justly take pride. And it happened so fast, as if in the proverbial blink of an eye. In my day growing up, homosexuals weren't loathed—they literally couldn't be *conceived*.[39] The epithets "faggot" and "fairy" were hurled, amidst snickers and snarls, at

effeminate boys, but no one actually believed that a male, let alone—God forbid!—someone you knew, liked another male *in that way*. It's easy to forget that as late as 1986 the Supreme Court, which is more often attentive to the barometer of public opinion than to the letter of the law, ruled in *Bowers v. Hardwick* that same-sex sodomy was not constitutionally protected. To buttress this decision, Chief Justice Warren Burger invoked the edifying precedent that —you can't make this stuff up!—"Homosexual sodomy was a capital crime under Roman Law." (*Bowers* wasn't overturned until 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas*.[40]) It was hip saxophonist Bill Clinton who signed into law the "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA) in 1996 that defined marriage as only between a man and a woman. Super-chill hope-and-change Barack Obama declared during and after his successful senatorial bid in 2004, "I've said clearly and unequivocally, I'm not in favor of gay marriage," "I do believe that marriage is between a man and a woman." He only came out in favor of gay marriage in 2012 after public opinion had shifted and wealthy donors pressured him when the election loomed. Nowadays, this sounds like a chapter from ancient history wrapped in cobwebs, as young people appear, at any rate in America's urban landscapes, blasé as to one another's sexual preference or genuinely proud at having gay friends. It also couldn't but be happily noticed by this gray-haired protester during the George Floyd demonstrations, the naturalness with which white and nonwhite millennials commingled, and the sincere outrage of white youth at racist cops. In the heyday of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, white support was awkwardly tinged with noblesse oblige or radical posturing. The ease noticeable nowadays owes not just to the enlightened zeitgeist, but additionally to the fact that white youth have also come to be marginalized by the economy, joining the ranks of the superfluous hitherto filled by those of darker hues, while many have found themselves, crammed four to an apartment,

rooming with a motley humanity. The police have come to represent not just racist brutality but also the chief enforcers of a heartless, corrupt, unjust system. White youth rage not just against the knee casually pressed on Floyd's neck but also, at the same time, against the Machine that has wrecked their present and cancelled their future. However it be explained, it remains a heartening, hopeful development, the seeds having been planted for not just a more tolerant world, not just one born of the pragmatic calculus of shared interests or political back-scratching, but of a world to come in which each recognizes the common humanity of the other, the common fate binding us—we are all in this mess, but also this miracle, together—our differences paling by comparison or receding into background noise. Each random transient quartet, one Black, one White, one Latino, one Whatever, one straight, one gay, one lesbian, one whatever, squashed together in a claustrophobic but also communal space, is a microcosm and harbinger, a shoot, however tender, of a future worth fighting for and, if there is to be a future, one which must and will be fought for.

The question is not whether the world has changed. Of course it has. The question is not whether to turn the clock back. Of course not. The fair-minded question instead is: Do the procedures and protocols prescribed by political correctness help or hinder this progress? That is, do they ease or exacerbate intergroup tensions, facilitate or forestall the search for answers as we inch forward in uncharted waters towards a more just world? In her prescient, timeless critique of the Bolshevik revolution, Rosa Luxemburg warned against the vanguard presumption that it, and it alone, possessed all the answers thus rendering free and open discussion a superfluous luxury:

> The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is, unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—not the case.

> Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied, the practical realization of socialism … is something which lies completely hidden in the mists of the future. What we possess in our program is nothing but a few main signposts which indicate the general direction in which to look for the necessary measures…. The socialist system of society should only be, and can only be, an historical product, born out of the school of its own experiences, born in the course of its realization, as a result of the developments of living history, which—just like organic nature of which, in the last analysis, it forms a part—has the fine habit of always producing along with any real social need the means to its satisfaction, along with the task simultaneously the solution. However, if such is the case, then it is clear that socialism by its very nature cannot be decreed or introduced by *ukase*. It has as its prerequisite a number of measures of force—against property, etc. The negative, the tearing down, can be decreed; the building up, the positive, cannot. New Territory. A thousand problems. Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative new force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts. (*The Russian Revolution*)

To now rephrase the question just posed, does political correctness release "effervescing life" and "creative new force" or stifle them?

Consider the assorted speech regulations enacted in recent years on college campuses, such as "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces," supposedly designed to ward off the harms of verbal aggression and "microaggression."[41] Do they protect or do they infantilize? Do students really need to be mollycoddled by a committee of self-coopted surrogate Mommies and Daddies deciding for them what they should hear or where and when they should hear it? For crissakes, this is *college*. A "woke" student group at Oberlin College invited me to speak on my book, *Gaza: An inquest into its martyrdom*. Immediately as I left campus, "as soon as ever my back was turned," they posted on their website an apology to attendees of my talk. Why? Because this group hadn't given a trigger warning before I quoted from a U.N. human rights report recounting Israeli atrocities. What did they expect I would be speaking on—*dabke* dancing in Gaza? The group then proceeded to accuse me of being "classist,"[42] "racist," "colonialist" and to boot "transphobic"—but wait, there's more—of having ridiculed

"anti-settler colonial, anti-imperialist, and antiracist futures." Were they *los indignados* or insufferably self-righteous brats accustomed to ordering about their nannies and treating elders with whom they disagreed likewise? Meanwhile, if one has fallen victim to a *micro*aggression, then it is invisible to the naked eye. Do 20-somethings who've already endured on social media every manner of public insult, humiliation and degradation by age six, really need protection against an infinitesimal slight? How does such pampering prepare a young person poised to enter the real world, where lack of calluses is, not least in the political arena, a severe handicap?

The fetters imposed on campus speech by cancel culture have little to recommend them. The "speech codes" enacted by administrations and faculty during the height of political correctness (circa 1990) were struck down by the courts as being too vague and overbroad.[43] However, to this day they keep popping up in new guises and with renewed force. Speech that triggers imminent high-threshold harm, it is generally admitted, can be legitimately curbed. The classic formulation of this limit can be found in Mill's *On Liberty*: a demagogue who eggs on "an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn dealer." The essence of free speech jurisprudence in the U.S. has been the crafting and recrafting of language to meet the Millian exception. The Supreme Court has wrestled with how proximate speech must be to a pernicious act to warrant its prohibition. The long arc of this jurisprudence has been to narrow the scope of prohibited speech. The Court's initial formulations homed in on the "bad tendency" of the speech.[44] That is, if per the *Communist Manifesto*, "Communists openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing conditions," then, however distant that prospect might be, the avowed objective was in itself sufficient to suppress its advocates. The principal victim of "bad tendency" speech prohibitions was, unsurprisingly, the political left.[45]

Later Court formulations required a much closer temporal/spatial nexus between incendiary speech and a criminal act. The bottom line was that, once the zone of prohibited speech was reduced, the zone of permissible speech expanded. It has come to a sorry day, indeed, when self-described leftists want to suppress speech that "hurts feelings" or that might cause harm in some nebulous future. In effect this reverses the hard-won struggles *by* the Left (in conjunction with civil libertarians) to curb government interference with political speech.

Beyond speech triggering imminent high-threshold harm, it would seem legitimate to ban the use on campus of insulting epithets *devoid of ideational content*. Excuse the stodginess, but a university is, or ideally should be, a citadel of learning devoted to the pursuit of Truth. When students pass through its gates, that's the "job description" they've signed on to. It's not a playground. You forfeit the right to fling vicious slurs that are in effect verbal clubs designed not to bolster the exchange of ideas but to abort it. Not conversation starters, they're conversation killers. How does one parse the truth value of "fucking spic," "fucking wetback," "fucking kike," "fucking cunt"? The Supreme Court gestured in *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* (1942) to the "narrowly limited" class of "utterances [that] are no essential part of any exposition of ideas, and are of … slight social value as a step to truth."[46] In 2015, members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity at the University of Oklahoma chanted, *There will never be a nigger at SAE, / There will never be a nigger at SAE. / You can hang him from a tree, /But he'll never sign with me. /There will never be a nigger at SAE.* A clutch of prominent civil libertarians rushed to defend the frat boys' First Amendment right.[47] It made as much sense as defending their "right" to pass gas in philosophy seminar.

Excepting these two circumscribed categories, the overriding pursuit of truth precludes speech restrictions. Cancel culture's rationale for additional curtailments does not withstand scrutiny:

- *The suppressed speech is false.* So long as we be fallible creatures, no one can know for certain that he's right and his interlocutor wrong. Further, one's own professed certainty doesn't justify debarring *others* from listening and deciding for themselves. Further still, engagement with a false idea enables the holder of a true idea to better apprehend his or her belief. And further still, the false idea might get the global picture wrong but nonetheless get "local" bits and pieces right. I will have a lot more to say about these considerations in Part II of this book.

- *The purveyor of the suppressed speech is evil.* However reprehensible the messenger, the message itself might still be true. Eminent First Amendment scholar Zechariah Chafee observed that malignant motives cannot be legitimate grounds for suppression of speech:

  > When the public is interested, bad motives ought not to deprive it of the benefit of what is said…. [T]ruth is truth, and just as valuable to the public, whether it comes from the most enthusiastic supporter of [U.S. entry in World War I] or from a pro-German, and in order to get the truth, conflicting views must be allowed.
  >
  > …
  >
  > Truth may be told with a bad purpose, but it is none the less truth; and the most dangerous falsehoods … may be committed from motives of the highest patriotism.

  Even if one were inclined to suppress speech the impetus of which is evil, Chafee went on to say, it's impossible to discern with sufficient certainty the animating motive: "You cannot tell a man's intention by looking at his forehead, you must look through it to the inside of his head; and no judge and jury are capable of looking through the skull of a man who has done nothing but talk to see what goes on inside." And again: "A bad intention is easily inferred from what we consider bad opinion.[48] I will also return to these points in Part II.

- *The suppressed speech is offensive.* Words can undoubtedly offend. But is this sufficient grounds to abridge speech? To those who would draw the line at instigating ideas, Justice Holmes famously rejoined: "Every idea is an incitement." With slight exaggeration, it might also be said that every idea is an offense. Even heliocentrism and evolution. In other words, every pullulating idea would be liable to suppression. Let it then be supposed that the said speech exceeds mere offense. "The shock and sense of affront, and sometimes the injury to mind and spirit," Justice Powell justly observed in *Rosenfeld v. New Jersey* (1972), "can be as great from words as from some physical attacks." Does *such* speech warrant State restraint? It's impossible, however, to calibrate degrees of psychic hurt and thus where and when a statutory threshold has been crossed, not least because such hurt varies from one person to the next, from the thin-skinned to the thick-skinned. When a Nazi organization planned to march in the predominantly Jewish village of Skokie, Illinois, the community attempted to ban it. Deciding in favor of the Nazis, the judge observed: "It is particularly difficult to distinguish a person who suffers actual psychological trauma from one who is only highly offended, and the Court has made it clear that speech may not be punished merely because it offends." But the practical difficulties run much deeper. First, consider consistency: Palestinian students can't very well seek to cancel a guest Israeli professor who's said atrocious things about Arabs on the grounds that they feel "unwelcome" and "uncomfortable," yet insist on their free-speech rights when Israeli students subsequently seek to cancel a pro-Palestinian speaker who makes *them* feel "unwelcome" and "uncomfortable." Second, the law of unintended consequences. As former A.C.L.U. president

Nadine Strossen richly documented, it's well-nigh impossible to craft a "hate" law that doesn't overflow its original intent by suppressing unpopular ideas in general, to the point that repressive states have weaponized such legislation in order to silence the very groups it was designed to protect.[49] Indeed, if a minority suffers from structural oppression, why would it surprise if the government representing the majority misuses the law against it?

- *The suppressed speech is regressive.* P.C., cancel culture—they pretend to be the avant-garde of progressive ideas. Whoever opposes them is retrograde, a benighted fool. "I have seen the future, and it works," muckraking Progressive-era journalist Lincoln Steffens announced in 1919 after returning from Bolshevik Russia. Positioning oneself on the right side of history before History has rendered its verdict, it's a tricky business.[50] If
  Bolshevism was the progressive cause du jour internationally in the first half of the 20th century, *eugenics* was all the rage domestically in progressive circles. A veritable Who's Who of progressive thinkers—Theodore Roosevelt, Margaret Sanger, and Helen Keller in the U.S.; Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, and H. G. Wells in the U.K.—embraced the eugenical improvement
  of the human race via scientific breeding. States in
  the Union that had "enlightened" governments such as Wisconsin passed mandatory sterilization laws to weed out "defectives" (those born with congenital handicaps and illnesses) and the "feebleminded" (those possessed of low morals and I.Q.s, which were said to go hand-in-hand). Such legislation met resistance, however, in the "backward" God-fearing Protestant Bible-Belt states of the Deep South that consecrated

our common humanity—salvation being within reach of *all* God's children.[51] Eventually, however, the Deep South, too, fell into line as these states succumbed before the juggernaut of "progress." The legality of state-enforced sterilization came before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Buck v. Bell* (1927). The defendant, Carrie Buck, along with her mother and daughter, was alleged to be feeble-minded. (There appears to have been no evidentiary basis for this contention.) Revered Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes upheld not just the legality but also the expediency of sterilization. "It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve
for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.… Three generations of imbeciles are enough." The most progressive member of the Court, Justice Brandeis, voted with the eight-person majority. The sole dissenter, Justice Butler, was a devout Catholic. (The Catholic Church was the first institutional bastion in the U.S. to oppose eugenic sterilization, not just on account of its opposition to birth control, but also because of its theological commitment to the sanctity of all human life regardless of eugenic "fitness.") It was not until the Nazis carried this progressive idea to its logical conclusion that it fell into disfavor.[52] The verdict of History is crystal clear: those beholden to science—the "progressives"—were wrong, those in thrall to religion—the "regressives"—were right. The right to sterilize was about government interference in the reproductive process; the right to abort is about barring government interference in it. But at bottom the moral stake is arguably the same: the sanctity of human life. The devout opposed sterilization then and oppose abortion now, whereas

progressives supported sterilization then and support abortion now. Feminist firebrand Katha Pollitt deems a woman's right to abortion the litmus test of feminism: to support abortion is to support the march of progress.[53] But is it that simple? The long arc of civilization would seem to bend toward an ever more inclusive notion of human life. In his utopian blueprint, Plato posited that "defective offspring will be quietly and secretly disposed of"—in effect, he sanctioned selective infanticide of, among others, "defective" and "illegitimate" children. It is not impossible to imagine that, as appreciation of human life broadens out over time, History's verdict on abortion will be as harsh as ours of Plato's counsel. The landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding a woman's (qualified) right to abortion, *Roe v. Wade* (1973), pretended to avoid the enigma of when life begins: "When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer." But the Court was being disingenuous. *First*, except by artifice, it seems impossible to decide the legality of abortion without engaging this irreducible question. *Second*, even if only by indirection, the Court *did* stake out a position on when life begins. The problem, alas, was that its position was wholly unpersuasive and wholly political. The Court dismissed the "pro-life" position that life begins at conception as "rigid" but didn't explain why it was rigid.[54] If life did in fact begin at conception—the Court claimed to be agnostic—what would be "rigid" about principled adherence to this belief by opposing all abortions? The Court dismissed, on the opposite end of the spectrum, the rigidity of the "pro-choice" position that life begins at birth by declaring that it was

within the State's writ to also decide when "potential life" begins and to protect it.[55] But wasn't that just displacing the decisive question, so to speak, one step back? If the Court didn't know when life began, how, pray tell, could it know when "potential life" began? "Potential" is an adjectival refinement of "life"; if the inception of life is a black box, then the modifier can't shed any light; for all anyone knows, "potential life" might begin a millisecond before live birth. In other words, the Court's conceptual innovation "potential life" doesn't inflect let alone undercut the purist pro-choice position that, life commencing at birth, access to abortion should be unrestricted. What's more, if the Court extended its writ backwards to "potential life," then didn't it logically wind up in the pro-life camp as conception is, if nothing else, "potential life"? Ultimately, the Court resolved to split the difference by supporting a right to abortion prior to the "'compelling' point" of the fetus' viability outside the womb, while largely barring abortion after viability. However much the Court denied it, viability was also the point at which it determined life began.[56] It made sense politically as the Court reached for the broad center in public opinion. But its own determination was as capricious (or rational) as the others.[57] The Court denoted viability as the point at which "meaningful life outside the mother's womb" commenced, as if being hooked up to medical gadgets miraculously transformed an unworthy life into a worthy one. It grounded the right to abortion during the pre-viability stage of pregnancy in the Fourteenth Amendment's right to "liberty,"[58] and it grounded the State's right to intervene during the viability stage of pregnancy in
its obligation to protect prenatal life. The Court presented this resolution of the abortion enigma as a compromise between the

extreme pro-choice and pro-life positions.[59] But the Court could only have "struck a balance"[60] in *Roe* if life begins at viability. If, however, life begins at conception, then, by dint of the Court's own reasoning, a woman's right to liberty would in general be trumped by the fetus' right to life, while if life commences at birth, then State intervention prior to birth would in general violate the woman's right to liberty.[61] Truth be told, the whole of the Court's jurisprudence is absurd, premised as it is on the belief that an insoluble moral enigma—when does life begin?—can be resolved by a clever turn of phrase or, less charitably, verbal subterfuge. The intractable fact is that, for all anyone knows, the so-called rigid pro-life position might be vindicated by History. Indeed, if the jury is still out, and it's human life that's at stake, then isn't the categorical imperative to err on the side of caution: if it might be life, then act as if it *is* life? My late Mother once whispered to me in sheer horror the story of a woman next to her on the transport to
Majdanek concentration camp: the future holding what it did, she suffocated her baby to death. Still, my Mother was emphatic that a woman had a right to abortion and a man shouldn't have any say. (I inferred, but can't say for sure, that she had an abortion in the Warsaw ghetto. Her Father, who was ultra-orthodox, refused to let her descend into the ghetto bunker accompanied by her boyfriend unless the marital rite was performed. She once confided to a female friend of mine in my presence that she lost her virginity to him. He was eventually killed.) Be it trapped in a death-stalking ghetto or on a transport to a concentration camp, a woman may be forced by ghastly circumstance to do what her whole being revolts against doing. But my Mother also took for granted that, for any woman choosing to abort, this was a decision of ultimate

resort, *in extremis extremis*. Shouldn't it always be supposed that the fetus might be a life? It *does* pose a danger, acting as if this possibility doesn't exist, that an abortion carries as much moral gravitas as washing off dead epidermal cells while showering. In one abortion decision by the Court after *Roe*, Justice Stevens averred that "No person undertakes such a decision lightly." Even were that true, it remains the case that if "there's nothing less calculated to strengthen the marriage tie than the prospect of early divorce" (Thomas More in *Utopia*), then there's nothing less calculated to preserve the sanctity of life than the prospect of easy abortion—in particular, the moral neutering of it. Even though a woman's right to have an abortion must be preserved as specific circumstances might extenuate it; and even though a woman's *legal* right in the here and now can't be held hostage to the contingency of History's moral verdict; and even though there's no rational point in the pregnancy when a woman's right to an abortion might be legally debarred; still, there's every good reason to attach a severe social stigma to abortion. In effect, such a stigma would mimic the overriding commandment that *thou shalt not kill*, which allows, however, for a right to self-defense. To set up a woman's right to an abortion as the litmus test of progress without simultaneously acknowledging it's a fraught decision betrays moral callousness as it verges on trivializing life.[62]

The upshot of this long excursus is that it's presumptuous to repress speech in the name of enlightened thought: just as causes once deemed progressive such as eugenics were later deplored as reactionary, so causes currently deemed progressive such as abortion rights might one day also be deplored as reactionary. What's more, just as the devout back then proved to be on the right side and the secular on the wrong side of

> History, so too may today's social conservatives in due course prove to be on the right side and "woke" liberals on the wrong side. When it comes to curbing speech, experience thus confirms the general rule in human affairs: humility is to be preferred over arrogance.

* * *

To step into a classroom today is to walk into a nuclear minefield. It's become a terror-ridden, humorless barracks. The problem, however, is not just the codified restrictions on speech and the phalanx of smug, dour thought-police, those holier-than-thou nonentities, employed by the university to enforce them. It's even more the suffocating and intimidatory atmosphere of cancel culture that permeates the campus. "Protection," John Stuart Mill wrote, "against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling." In other words, one must be on guard against not just the laws on the books but also impalpable restrictions on free speech. Elsewhere he observed, "In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest, everyone lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship." It would be hard to improve on this as a description of campus life: *under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship*. Nadine Strossen is perfectly aware of what she calls this "functional equivalent of censorship." And yet she sets as an auspicious development that "hateful, discriminatory expression and actions now are swiftly and strongly condemned by government officials, community leaders, social media campaigns, and members of the disparaged groups and organizations that champion their rights. Such condemnation is leveled not only against intentional, explicitly hateful expression, but also against unwittingly insensitive expression." If, as she persuasively argues, "hate speech" codes easily overflow into banning all manner of unpopular speech,

shouldn't it also be a matter of grave concern that such concerted public pillorying, the "functional equivalent of censorship," might also cast a too wide net? Strossen commends as a "promising" initiative that "Google has added to its website a disclaimer about sites containing hateful messages," and she also endorses the approach of "seeking to persuade the group that invited" a hateful speaker "to withdraw its invitation."[63] Many an office software filtering out "hate speech" has blocked access to my website. Wherever I am invited to speak, the campus Hillel invariably "advises" the sponsoring organization to rescind the invitation as I am a "divisive" and "controversial" speaker, an advocate of "terrorism," and an "antisemite and Holocaust-denier." But if the alleged "hate" speech is marginal—as in the ravings of a certified crackpot—instead of casting a social taboo on it, why can't it be safely ignored? And if it's not marginal, shouldn't it be engaged and demonstrated, proven, to be false (if it's false)? What is the necessity or desirability of a Google "Surgeon General's Warning" that "the speech you are about to hear will be harmful to your mental health"? As a rule, shouldn't we be trusted to attend to our mental health on our own? Juvenal famously said of Plato's utopia, "Who will guard the guardians?" It might also be said of Mark Zuckerberg: as he decides what to post and what to cancel, who will watch over *him*? Do college students need to be put on alert by campus elders that their "friend" is a "bad influence"? Shouldn't tit-for-tat speech be encouraged, not chilled by Hillel thugs who barely conceal the mailed fist behind their kindly advice?

The anarchist Emma Goldman is said to have drawn this line in the sand: "If I can't dance, I don't want your Revolution." I say: "If I can't laugh, I don't want your Revolution." It's impossible nowadays for a professor to crack a joke in class without dread of being hauled down to the Grand Inquisitor or Madame Mao's office. The only fair game is former President Donald Trump, in which case anything goes.

If Republican students chafe at this double standard, they have every right to. God only knows the wrath and fury that will be visited on the poor soul who dares not just to joke about Obama but merely qualify his sainthood. It's a cliché that good humor is always edgy, it goes out on a limb. It also misfires nine times out of ten. It might deserve a boo, but why a bullet? To be sure, a classroom is not a comedy club, but it's also not a stalag. Must professors mentally sweat buckets before peppering a lugubrious lecture with a little humor? Granted, some subjects are probably off limits. Lynchings. Gas chambers. Rape. But before too much is inferred, it might be remembered that two classic antifascist films made during World War II—Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* and Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*—were laced with comedy. Even after the war, when the full depth of Nazi barbarism was exposed, Mel Brooks wrote and directed *The Producers*, of which the signature production number was the sublimely tasteless "Springtime for Hitler, and Germany." I still see in my mind's eye my late Mother laughing along as she sang the lyrics. Brooks also produced a remake of *To Be or Not to Be*. (In an unexpectedly generous plot twist, Brooks gave over center stage not to a Jewish but instead a gay victim of Nazism.) And then there was Roberto Benigni in *Life is Beautiful*. The Jewish comedian Jack Benny created a stage persona around being a cheap Jew. Who can forget this immortal sketch?

> Mugger: *Your money or your life?*
>
> Benny: [Silent]
>
> Mugger: *Listen Bud, I said, YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE?*
>
> Benny: [Turns to audience, chin resting on his palm, deadpan] *I'm thinking.*

Pity the poor Jewish student who nowadays performs this sketch on College Comedy Night. Indeed, *Saturday Night Live* comedian Larry David just barely survived as he took notice of "a very disturbing pattern emerging" from the "sexual harassment stuff in the news of

late," when a slew of predatory Jews salient in American culture, starting with Harvey Weinstein, came under public scrutiny:

> Many of the predators—not all, but many of them—are Jews. And I have three words to say to that: *Oy vey izmir*" [Yiddish for *woe is me*].

Were a non-Jew, in a comedy, or worse still, pundit venue to notice this "very disturbing pattern," it would be in these cancel culture times a surefire career-killer. The planet won't stop spinning on its axis and the heavens won't come crashing in even as humor does cross a red line. Eddie Murphy's routines in the 1980s such as *Delirious* and *Raw* were egregiously homophobic. He himself has apologized for their "ignorant" content. But one has to search far and wide in the YouTube comments section for a single expression of outrage.

It's not always even clear what crosses a line or why it crosses a line. Consider this laugh-out-loud putdown in *The Fire Next Time*:

> White Americans seem to feel that happy songs are *happy* and sad songs are *sad*, and that, God help us, is exactly the way most white Americans sing them—sounding, in both cases, so helplessly, defenselessly fatuous that one dare not speculate on the temperature of the deep freeze from which issue their brave and sexless little voices. (his emphases)

Is James Baldwin a bigot, to be cancelled? Or did the Black church perhaps nurture more soulful, less inhibited artistic performance? (It's hard to deny that the White Bread dancers on *American Bandstand* didn't hold a candle to those twisting and turning down the *Soul Train* line.) Toni Morrison anointed Bill Clinton the "first Black president" as he "displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas." If she weren't a first tier "person of color," could Morrison have gotten away with such—let's be honest—racist trash? A professor at a British university was sacked for saying that Jews are "the cleverest people in the world, and much maligned for it." Inasmuch as 11 out of every 10 Jews are

also decidedly of this opinion, it's not clear whom he offended. A person must not be referred to as "fat" but as "large." Does that really make an obese person feel better? In my day, "queer" was an epithet of hate; now it's a badge of pride. "Colored" was also a term of abuse; now "people of color" is the politically correct nomenclature. "Nigger" has undergone an evolution in both directions: it's the ultimate signifier of hate in the campus public sphere; it's the ultimate term of endearment in the campus locker room. (Even, I've noticed, between Pakistanis!) In woke circles, it's "the N-word." One can't help but wonder whether—counterproductively—this invests the word with magical, totemic powers to hurt. In my day, a person in a wheelchair was "handicapped." Then the politically correct term was "challenged." Now it's "disabled." Personally, were I driving a vehicle that stalled, I would much prefer it to be, so to speak, handicapped than disabled.[64] It might further be noticed that the English language has its own rhythm, cadence, and melody. Language, of course, evolves, but it's an organic process; it *de*volves when a hammer, chisel and crowbar are deployed to redact it for acceptable public consumption. Even if lacking the delicacy of a Chinese character, its orthography is also bound by an aesthetic: how a sentence *looks* on the printed page. Shoehorning political agendas into prose—as in *he/she*—murders it. If English majors moonlighting as woke apparatchiks had, heaven forbid, ever broken the spine of an English novel, they'd know this.

In the event of a speech clash on campus, administrators and faculty should butt out. Students are fully equipped to resolve it on their own. I myself would much rather expostulate my cause before them than before a faculty committee or an administrator. V. I. Lenin acknowledged in *State and Revolution* that conflicts would arise even in a classless society. But resolving them, he anticipated, wouldn't require a "special apparatus of repression." On the contrary,

> this will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted.

Setting aside the arms bit, it's a sensible model to emulate. During my tenure battle, faculty stood idly by or joined in as I was thrown to the administrator-wolves who devoured me alive. Whereas students who had actually sat in my classroom and were privy, not from rumor but from personal experience, to my convictions rallied to my defense. (Some even staged a sit-in and went on a hunger strike.) Corny as it might sound, I trust in the common sense, fairness, and probity of students,[65] who are not yet jaded by the burdens of the "real world" but, in their majority, are still idealistic and principled; not, to be sure, in this gang of woke politics at Oberlin or that gang of hate politics at Dartmouth, but in students assembled in their generality. Leave students to their own devices. Let them decide on their own how to break up the occasional verbal scuffle. Away with the Grand Inquisitors! Away with the Madame Maos! Away with speech codes! Away with all special apparatuses of repression!

When I was an adjunct professor at hip New York University in the 1990s, there was an abundance of sympathy for AIDS victims on display. Faculty and administrators sported stylish red-ribbon pins. When graduate student workers on campus started organizing, however, their support was visibly invisible. The woke crowd has found a new mascot: transgender people. During the George Floyd protests, the *New York Times* emblazoned on its homepage, "Black Trans Women Seek More Space in the Movement They Helped Start."[66] Angela Davis homes in on "trans prisoners" as the "group that is perhaps more criminalized than any other group."[67] If one is going to play the "oppression sweepstakes," it might be supposed that a Black youth locked up for life for a crime he didn't commit is also a worthy contender. To listen to woke programming, you'd think the

two most burning issues confronting Humanity are climate change and transgender bathrooms in North Carolina. During the catastrophic 2022 Russia-Ukraine war, one fashionably woke news anchor decided to boldface the plight of "trans Ukrainians unable to leave because their gender identity on their passport did not match their gender identity."[68] It might be supposed, however, that all manner of people with special hardships and handicaps had trouble fleeing. Albeit not as kinky, flight couldn't have been a cakewalk for the wheelchair-bound either. Woke presenters positively drool over a guest who is transgender, as if it was the next best thing to being crowned Homecoming Queen. We're all supposed to celebrate. But celebrate what? Is it a celebratory occasion if one is born with a wrenching mismatch between soma and soul; if one undergoes long, agonizing and costly medical procedures that, in general, are as effective as hair plugs and breast implants in repairing one's genetic make-up? No doubt, S.P.U. (*Surgeons and Pharma United!*) is breaking out the bubbly. But why the rest of us? A transgender person deserves maximum compassion, for sure. I refuse, however, to hop on the woke bandwagon. I can already hear the objection: Isn't celebration an act of compassion? Call me a skeptic. During the German occupation of France, Sartre recalled, Parisians would conspicuously embrace Jews they passed in the street. The Jew, Sartre observed,

> knew at once that he had become the object of a demonstration of tolerance, that his interlocutor had chosen him as a pretext for declaring to the world, and to himself: "Look at me, I have liberal ideas."

The reader, I trust, can connect the dots.[69] The woke crowd latches onto the furthest-most limits to manifest just how cutting-edge, how much better and purer, it is. Gays and lesbians are so passé, so humdrum. At its worst, the woke cult of transgenders is a cross between voyeurism and morbidity, a fascination with the sexually bizarre, a politically correct version of snuff pornography. It's at the

"intersectionality" of the lassitudinous culture of the Hamptons and the depraved sexual ennui of Hollywood. It's most emphatically not the lived life of 99.999 percent of humanity, *including transgender persons*, who modestly aspire to the dignity of labor and the joy of love, not to be present at or put on display in a prurient freak show. If anything, the woke culture of transgenders harkens back to the hideous telethons that used to put singing cripples on display ("Look at us, we're talking, / Look at us, we're walking"), ostensibly to raise money for a cure, but more likely to show the world how "beautiful" its sponsors were. (Each of the showcased Hollywood stars earned in an hour what a telethon raised in a year.)[70] For truth's sake, it must also be said that tolerance has its natural limits; the dilemma is determining them. Mill encouraged "experiments in living." He approved not just individuality but also, and especially, eccentricity: "That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time." The problem is, only the thinnest of lines divides the eccentric from the pathological. Up until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association classified homosexuality as a "psychiatric disorder." Now it barely raises an eyebrow. Times change, values change. But moral perplexities persist. Thus, the U.S. Supreme Court's liberal wing fell mute when its conservatives posed the questions, if same-sex sodomy is constitutionally protected, why aren't bestiality and adult incest, and if gay marriage is constitutionally protected, why isn't polygamy?[71] When Woody Allen fell in love with his partner's adopted daughter, was this eccentricity or perversion? Honest people can differ. The dogmatic certitudes of wokeness, however, possess neither intellectual content nor elementary coherence. Caitlyn Jenner (formerly Bruce Jenner), although still possessing male anatomy and genetics, is celebrated for identifying as a woman, while Nkechi Amare Diallo (formerly Rachel Dolezal), a woman of European ancestry, is vilified for identifying as Black. Diallo had been "passing" as a Black woman

for years and headed a local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P.; her ancestry was "outed" after her repeated reports of racist abuse earned her enemies. Jenner, on the other hand, "transitioned" to much fanfare and heavy publicity, including photo shoots for a popular magazine cover wearing lingerie, make-up, and "come hither" looks.[72] Our sex and ancestry are both determined, immutably, before we are born. Why extol the idea of changing one's sex while simultaneously denigrating the idea of changing one's race? In the meantime, on one day it's adduced in support of gay rights that one doesn't choose to be gay. On the next day, the woke brigade enlightens the provincial masses that sexual orientation is a "social construction," and that, once liberated of these repressive constructs, we'd all be sexually "fluid."[73] But if that's the case, a gay person *does* choose to be gay or, at any rate, can hold out the hope, if he so desires, of not being gay. (Ironically, the notion of "social construction" perfectly meshes with rightwing "conversion therapy.") On one day, it's said that the "pro-life" movement traces back to a misogynistic plot to control a woman's body. On the next day, it's said that abortion is a fundamental right of "pregnant people." But if men can also bear children, and if they, too, would be subordinated were abortion outlawed, then "pro-life" can't be about misogyny. (Even as it's common to mock the irrational beliefs of Trump's supporters such as intelligent design and climate change denial, it's hard to conceive a more anti-rational notion than members of the male sex conceiving.)[74] Emerson might be right that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Still, a little consistency is also not a bad thing. Woke culture, however, evidences the arbitrary hand of a totalitarian mindset.

In my youth I was a Maoist, a devout devotee of Marxism–Leninism–Mao Tse-tung Thought. The most bewildering thing about Maoism was, you never knew when the Party Line would change or

why. One day's "true disciple" of Chairman Mao would be denounced the next day as a "running dog of U.S. imperialism." Today's woke politics is yesterday's Maoism come alive. This epithet is politically correct; that epithet is verboten. This joke (about Trump) is funny; that joke (about Obama) is blasphemy. Transgenders are to be celebrated; race crossovers are to be vilified. If the Party Line switches, and you lag behind—poof!—you're cancelled. A few years back I was cancelled by a prominent newscaster I'd known for 30 years after jokingly telling one of her female staff, "You look so young, you could be one of Michael Jackson's playmates." Here I naively imagined I was being suave and debonair. Especially in my age-sensitive final act, it's a high compliment to be told you look young. (The three consecutive words I detest most in the English language are "for your age"—as in, You look great, *for your age*.) But no, it was sexual harassment, for which I must show repentance or suffer banishment. I was henceforth banned from her program. Never mind it never even occurred to me that I was making a sexual remark: Michael Jackson had a yen for *prepubescent boys*; she was an *adult woman*. My "days of white male privilege are over," this Goddess of Wokeness kept intoning. Privilege? Her father attended Harvard College and was a physician. Her three siblings and she herself attended Harvard. She now presides over a media operation with an annual budget of $10 million. My parents stepped onto these shores after stepping out of concentration camps. Growing up, my home was so cold we put the steak *in* the freezer to defrost it. I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth. Whatever I've accomplished, it's been entirely by dint of hard work; no leg up, no nepotism, no currying favor. For the past 15 years I have not only been unemployed but what's worse, unemployable, even as I endeavored to *volunteer* teach. (Ironically, my professional cul-de-sac traced back to a corrupt public figure who exacted revenge after I exposed him on this newscaster's own program.) But *I'm* privileged. Or

maybe it's the *white male* thing she had in mind. In other words, because of that attempt (perhaps abortive) at humor, Finkelstein now fell into the same category as (Harvey) Weinstein and (Jeffrey) Epstein. Lest I entertained any doubts of my sin, this reigning Queen of Political Correctness breathlessly recalled that a shocking documentary on Michael Jackson had been screened at Sundance Film Festival while she was in attendance, and everyone present was appalled. As it happens, I don't get invited to Sundance, and even if that miracle did come to pass, and even if I were so pathetic a geriatric groupie as to attend, it's most improbable I'd make a beeline for a Michael Jackson doc. Indeed, who would have guessed that Sundance had superseded Spinoza as the arbiter of ethics? It amazes how a reasonably intelligent person can metamorphose into a woke machine, churning out insipid clichés as her mental faculty degenerates to mush, and can be so lacking in self-awareness as to lecture me from on high about privilege. The only things missing from such woke politics are the reeducation camps and firing squads. It's true that every cultural revolution passes through a lunatic phase before a higher, happier point of social equilibrium is reached. This transition is upon us: *The Dictatorship of Virtue-Signaling.* It doesn't, however, absolve the sane among us from taking stock of the fact that woke politics *is* lunacy.

* * *

Identity politics is as old as the White Cliffs of Dover and the Black Hills of Kentucky. Woke politics is political correctness 2.0. Cancel culture is the civic form of McCarthyism. Still, something *has* changed. It's the enhanced salience of wokeness on the social landscape. Until recently, these cultural fads played out on the margins of society. They were pretty much confined to the college campus and the political left. Even on campus their influence can be

exaggerated. No doubt, they affected the tenor of university life as multiculturalism and thought-policing became fixtures. The results could be bizarre. At Brooklyn College (City University of New York), where I taught from 1988 to 1992, the Multicultural Action Committee wouldn't allow my Mother to speak about her experiences during the Nazi holocaust as her remarks might "hurt the feelings" of Jewish students. (Although firm in her belief in the necessity for a Jewish place of refuge, she had few kind words to spare for Israel.) At DePaul University, where I taught from 2001 to 2007, it seemed as if every other month a new poster went up announcing a symposium on *The Black Body*. Leaving aside the creepy voyeurism, it wouldn't have hurt if the university offered a few minority scholarships. The student body was whiter than … the White Cliffs of Dover. Flaky degree programs sprung up to propitiate the Gods of p.c. But the hard core of the higher education curriculum was left mostly unscathed. Postmodernism contaminated English Literature, Comparative Literature, Foreign Languages and Anthropology, but History proved immune to the contagion, while Economics and Political Science moved in the opposite direction as they became, for better or worse (probably worse), increasingly quantitative. Although lower-tier philosophy departments reduced course offerings to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida (taught by professors weaned on *Philosophy for Dummies*), the curriculum in serious departments stayed redoubtably austere, as befitted the discipline. Mathematics and science were off-limits. If any doubt existed that the natural sciences were a closed book to postmodernists, they were put to rest when a trendy cultural-studies journal, *Social Text*, published a send-up of postmodern science criticism entitled "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a transformative hermeneutics of quantum gravity." The spoofer was a trained physicist disgusted by academic charlatanism. The editors published it as a serious scientific contribution, only to

suffer mortifying scorn when the author publicly revealed it was a hoax.

But woke politics and cancel culture are now ubiquitous. Overflowing the walls of the ivory tower, they have saturated the airwaves and social media. Once-serious leftist journalists now refer to "pregnant people" and "Latinx" (why would an ethnic group want to sound like a porn site?), while people of color "experts" seem to spend more time braiding their hair than cracking their books. Every website's become a dating app as professionals list their pronouns beside their names. Whenever I see *he/him* or *she/her*, I think *fuck/you*. You must be living an awfully precious life if, amid the pervasive despair of an economy in free fall, your uppermost concern is clinging to your pronouns. Here's my shout-out to the snooty, self-indulgent, virtue-signaling Harvard-Hamptons-Hollywood crowd: "I'll tell you my pronouns if you tell me your net worth." On the first day of a graduate seminar, students used to describe their intellectual interests. Nowadays, it's de rigueur to declare your sexual orientation. It's only a matter of time before a student announces, "I'm *she/her* and I'm packing a thick, juicy nine-incher." Meanwhile, a 2020 Princeton University "Faculty Letter" put some 50 demands to the administration in the name of "anti-racism."[75] A couple seemed reasonable enough, such as "remove questions about misdemeanors and felony convictions from admissions applications." But overwhelmingly it's a self-indulgent self-aggrandizing Santa's Wish List that effectively calls on Princeton to institute quotas in tenure hires of faculty of color, and to "reward the invisible work done by faculty of color with course relief and summer salary." What's this "invisible work"? It comprises being called upon "to stand as emblems and spokespersons of diversity at Princeton" and "present the image of a diverse faculty to the world." In other words, attending photo-ops and sumptuous soirees.[76] For labors so onerous, shouldn't Princeton throw

in alongside holiday pay a recuperative jaunt in Tahiti? Putting aside the countless perks of teaching there (in fact, most faculty just barely teach), the average annual salary of a full professor at Princeton comes to over $200,000. It's hard to imagine that a Du Bois would have participated in such a contemptible extortion racket masquerading as "anti-racism."

What's going on? The short answer is the Democratic Party is now wide a-woke. Its mass base was once the trade union movement. The stirring keynote speech at the 1984 Democratic National Convention was delivered by Mario Cuomo, father of former Left-bashing New York State governor Andrew Cuomo. Invoking the theme "A Tale of Two Cities," Cuomo sounded like a prefiguration[77] of Bernie Sanders as he excoriated, to repeated tumultuous applause, class privilege —"the royalty and the rabble"—and spoke in the name of "those people who work for a living because *they have to*, not because some psychiatrist told them it's a convenient way to fill the interval between birth and eternity."[78] However, the Party has since metamorphosed, or degenerated, into a stronghold of identity politics as, on the one hand, the industrial heartland hollowed out and an ever-decreasing fraction of American workers belonged to trade unions (down from one-third of the labor force in the 1960s to one-tenth today) while, on the other hand, the party more deeply embraced the rich and super-rich as the demands of the impotent working class could be safely ignored. But every mass political party needs a mass base. The Democratic Party substituted "oppressed minorities" of every imaginable ilk—ethnic, sexual, whatever. The badge of progressive politics has ceased to be solidarity with the working class. Indeed, workers have been largely written off as 2016 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton deposited them in the "basket of deplorables." (A chunk of the white working class eventually found a new home in Donald Trump's ostensibly more welcoming Republican Party.) In effect, the Democratic Party has

thrown its formidable institutional weight behind the once-marginal identity politics movement. From a silly sideshow, it has entered center stage in American political life. The identity politics of the left has converged and overlapped, if imperfectly, with the identity politics of the Democratic Party. Hitherto vacuum-packed in an empty tin can, the hollowness of identity politics now echoes across a vast political abyss. The 2020 Democratic National Convention sounded like a parody of Tom Lehrer's own "National Brotherhood Week" parody.[79] On opening night of the convention, the only featured speaker to concretely articulate the party's working-class agenda—raise the minimum wage to $15 per hour, lower the age of Medicare eligibility to 60 years—was anti–Democratic establishment Democrat Bernie Sanders.[80] Ever-woke Public Broadcasting Service (P.B.S.) coverage nixed the one segment in which four workers spoke qua workers. But host Judy Woodruff and fellow party apparatchiks found ample time to rave about Michelle Obama. Woodruff was floored that Michelle could babble from a teleprompter a mouthful of platitudes nonstop for "more than 18 minutes…. How many people can pull off something like Michelle Obama just did?" Move over, Demosthenes. "It's a hard time and everyone's feeling it," the former First Lady intoned, "We've sacrificed so much this year." Indeed, who can't feel the Obamas' pain as they sacrificed another $12 million in December 2019 to purchase a 7,000-square-foot estate in Martha's Vineyard (seven bedrooms and eight bathrooms) just 30 months after sacrificing $8 million to purchase an 8,200-square-foot estate (nine bedrooms and nine bathrooms) in Jeff Bezos' ritzy Washington, D.C., neighborhood? As First Lady, Michelle Obama most recalled Nancy Reagan's partiality to high-end designer outfits at state functions, the differences being that Michelle racked up more hours each day working out, and the media lapped up Michelle but looked down on Nancy. At last count, the Obamas have raked in $65 million through a joint book deal with

Random House, negotiated a "high-eight-figure" deal with Netflix, and Jeff Bezos—in what might be construed a life-insurance policy—has donated $100 million to Obama's foundation. (It's not hard to guess which side Obama will be on if and when Amazon workers strike.) When Obama was at Harvard Law School, this exalted "community organizer" famously exhorted his teary-eyed classmates, "Don't Let Harvard Change You!" It was as if, by chanting this refrain, he and they, clinging to while simultaneously easing out of their ideals, imagined that they would be granted absolution. In other words, it was a vintage Obama ritual: therapeutic theater to salve the guilty conscience of the guilty-as-sin.

If the general cause of identity politics' salience was Democratic Party realignment, its proximate cause was the upcoming 2020 presidential election. A mummified Egyptian nominee would probably have aroused more grassroots enthusiasm than Joe Biden. When unprecedented mass protests broke out after George Floyd's public execution in May 2020, the Democratic Party and its media affiliates attempted to ride the tiger. Hoping to replicate the energy of President Trump's "racist" base, the Party pivoted—or appeared to pivot—far left in order to surf this "antiracist" wave to victory in November. Careful not to slow the protests' momentum, the Party gave them free rein as it embraced their most extreme demands while channeling them in benign, symbolic directions. Initially, the anti-police brutality protests were half Black, half white.[81] Within a couple of weeks about three-fourths of the protesters were white. They were also overwhelmingly young. Even a 40-year-old was a rare sighting. Covid-19 was partly to blame. But the bigger reason was that the baby boomers didn't much care. The white demonstrators were almost to the last former Bernie Sanders supporters. Those who earlier attended the Bernie mega-rallies were now marching in the streets. Youth supported Bernie because his agenda spoke to them: Medicare for All,

free higher education, cancellation of student debt, massive public works/jobs programs, and combatting climate change. The 1960s "peace and love" generation was pejoratively dubbed the "me" generation by jaundiced observers. It turned out to be true; they proved to be about—and only about—themselves. The boomers already have Medicare, they can just barely remember college, they accumulated no student debt (higher education was more or less free back then), they're already retired, and they'll die before the planet dies. The last thing they wanted was Bernie's touted "revolution." Why rock the boat if it might crack your nest egg? The older the primary voter, the poorer Bernie fared. If young whites marched alongside African-Americans, it wasn't just an act of solidarity, it was also against a common enemy: a system that had wrecked their lives, leaving them no present or future. At the outset the demonstrations were politically inchoate. One rarely saw a political placard apart from the occasional "Black Lives Matter." The slogans vented raw, crude, unfiltered rage. "N.Y.P.D., Suck My Dick!" (shouted as lustily by white women as Black men). Eschewing the radical pose, seasoned Black activists probed the limits of the possible. Veteran Newark, New Jersey, organizer Lawrence Hamm spotlighted the legal "super-status" of police—48-hour rule, qualified immunity—that preempted conviction of killer cops. But in the pervasive absence of tested leadership, the inevitable happened: the most extreme slogan got the most traction. The movement eventually settled on the demand "Defund the police." It sounded super-radical. Which, beyond the movement's narrow confines, also made it super-alienating.[82] Even Bernie demurred: "Anyone who thinks that we should abolish all police departments in America, I don't agree." It's most improbable that Black people in poor, crime-ridden neighborhoods supported it. Who, really, would prefer a dead line when they dialed 911? If patiently unpacked, the slogan made perfect sense: reallocate a portion

of the bloated budgets of police departments to much-needed social services. It used to be in New York City, two or three officers patrolled a racially charged, "high-crime" neighborhood.[83] Nowadays, it's ten huddled together, nine of them peering into their iPhones, the tenth making a beeline for the donut shop. But a slogan that needs to be parsed is not a good slogan. (Sanders, incidentally, did support the parsed version.) By Juneteenth,[84] the protesters were almost uniformly white, as they listened solemnly to young African-American women angrily bemoaning their "invisibility." Surmising that the demos weren't going anywhere, young Blacks mostly drifted away. The mass protests vanished altogether on a national scale when the principal objective switched from defunding the police to toppling statues and effacing murals. How many white young people, jobless and imminently homeless, were going to come out marching day in and day out in order to bring down the replica of yet another outed "racist"? When a statue of Ulysses S. Grant was pulled down, the movement had manifestly entered a terminal phase. Among Grant's most faithful devotees was Frederick Douglass.[85] A white kid angrily stomping on a statue of Grant couldn't but feel slightly ridiculous. ("Take that, and that, and that, you privileged white, colonial, cis-gender, racist!") Alas, a huge political opportunity had been squandered. If the "Jobs and Freedom" slogan of the 1963 March on Washington"[86] had been tweaked so that the demand "Justice and Jobs" seized the moment, the nascent coalition in the streets between an antiracist and anti-capitalist politics could have consolidated around concrete political demands.[87] In other words, the hard kernel of identity politics—which articulates the irreducibly racist aspect of American society—meets the class agenda of the Sanders campaign. Instead, the demonstrations petered out amidst radical posturing and vacuous identity politics that left both Black and white participants bereft of the buoyant feeling of victory.[88]

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Chapter 2

Kimberlé Crenshaw Goes on a Safari

Not one to lag behind her woke colleagues, Sydney Ember of the *New York Times* joined the Martha's Vineyard branch of the Harriet Tubman Collective. Ember will forever be remembered as the *Times* hatchet wo/man assigned the Bernie Sanders beat during the 2020 Democratic Party primary. When Bernie suffered a heart attack on the primary trail, the Establishment pounced on it and wouldn't let go in order to undercut his candidacy. Ember's signature lede in every article on Sanders for weeks on end immortalized her name in the annals of (yellow) journalism. The essence of her reportage was: "Bernie Sanders, who suffered a heart attack, reportedly suffered a heart attack. The hospital in which Sanders, who suffered a heart attack, is convalescing, issued a statement that he suffered a heart attack. Although Sanders, who suffered a heart attack, was in the hospital for less than three days, it remains a matter of grave concern that he suffered a heart attack."[89] Ember's venomous loathing of Bernie could perhaps be traced to the fact that he continuously railed against the "billionaire class" while she married into a family the patriarch of which is the global managing director of Bain and Company, among the world's most depraved "consultancy" firms. That might sound like vulgar Marxism, but, as the journalist Alexander Cockburn once observed, vulgar Marxism is often a good first approximation. In any event, Ember posited that Bernie's class politics was passé, identity politics was where the real action was at: "when the revolution finally came, it wasn't his."[90] To bolster her point, Ember enlisted the reigning High Priestess of identity politics, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the

term "intersectionality." The term is now so hip, it wouldn't surprise if a women's studies algorithm calculates student paper grades on its per-sentence usage. Like Newton's three laws of motion, intersectionality, according to Crenshaw's seminal paper,[91] comprises a trio of revolutionary propositions:

- *A single individual can suffer multiple forms of oppression.* Crenshaw dubs it "double discrimination—the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex." This not-quite-so novel idea dates back to the genesis of modern leftwing politics. It was taken for granted that militant defense of worker rights must go hand in hand with defense of women's rights and minority rights; that a woman could be exploited not just as a worker but also on account of her sex, and that a Black person could be exploited not just as a worker but also on account of his or her skin color. German militants such as Clara Zetkin proposed an annual International Women's Day at the 1910 meeting of the International Socialist Women's Conference, and the holiday was first celebrated on March 8 in Soviet Russia after women won the right to vote. (Zetkin was a close comrade and intimate of Rosa Luxemburg. Zetkin's son, Kostia, was 14 years Rosa's junior and her lover.) Whereas the U.S. Communist Party has been consigned to the proverbial dustbin of history, two of its achievements cannot fairly be gainsaid: its outsized role in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.) and its championing of African-American rights.[92] It's no accident that the leading African-American scholar of the 20th century, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the leading African-American public figure, Paul Robeson, aligned themselves with the Communists, who stood beside and behind the Black community—and especially super-exploited Black workers—

when no one else dared. The Party courageously defended the Scottsboro Boys[93] and Willie McGee.[94] The young Angela Davis first came under public scrutiny for her membership in it. (She once laughingly reminisced that, so steeped was her family in the Party, she looked elsewhere for a true radical experience.) Decades before Crenshaw came along, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.) activist Frances Beal published the paper "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and female" (1969) and was also editor of the Third World Women's Alliance newspaper *Triple Jeopardy*, directed at Black women workers. The concept, if not the nifty buzz word "intersectionality," long predated Crenshaw. No, Kimberlé, you didn't invent the wheel.

- *The oppression of Black women is distinct from and greater than the sum of its parts.* Black women are oppressed not just because they're Black and not just because they're women and not just because they're Black and they're women, but also because they're *Black women*: "they experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race and sex discrimination, but as Black women." Crenshaw adduces no evidence that a Black woman's hybrid oppression alchemizes to create an oppressed *tertium datur*. U.S. history books are rife with evidence of systemic discrimination based on skin color and based on sex. But based strictly and separately on being a Black woman? Did slave-owners wantonly rape Black women because as women who—being Black—lacked all legal protections, they fell easy prey to white phantasms of Black carnality; or, on the contrary, because Black women had transmogrified into a species apart? If Crenshaw's "theorizing" has gone off the deep end, still, its political dividends are not to be sniffed at. The triple oppression it confers—qua Black, qua woman, qua Black

woman—places this category of victims in a most enviable position to win the "oppression sweepstakes" and all the entitlements such as preferential hiring that attend this victory. Looked at from another angle, the *Crenshaw multiplier*—i.e. each multiple oppression creates a new distinct oppression—sets off, *literally*, an infinite regression into legal oblivion. Thus, a Black lesbian female paraplegic can sue for compensation based on these discrete discriminations: Black; lesbian; female; paraplegic; {Black lesbian}; {Black female}; {Black paraplegic}; {lesbian female}; {lesbian paraplegic}; {Black lesbian female}; {Black lesbian paraplegic}; {lesbian female paraplegic}; {{Black lesbian}{female paraplegic}}; {{Black female}{lesbian paraplegic}}; {{lesbian female}{Black paraplegic}}; {{lesbian female}{Black paraplegic}}; {{Black lesbian female}{paraplegic}}….[95] It's hard not to sympathize with a district court decision, deplored by Crenshaw in her article, that recoiled at traveling down this "intersectional" legal route:

> Plaintiffs have failed to cite any decisions which have stated that Black women are a special class to be protected from discrimination. The Court's own research has failed to disclose such a decision. The plaintiffs are clearly entitled to a remedy if they have been discriminated against. However, they should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new "super-remedy" which would give them relief beyond what the drafters of the relevant statutes intended. Thus, this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively either, but not a combination of both.
>
> …
>
> The legislative history surrounding [the relevant legal statute] does not indicate that the goal of the statute was to create a new classification of "black women" who would have greater standing than, for example, a black male. The prospect of the creation of new classes of protected minorities, governed only by the mathematical principles of permutation and combination, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hackneyed Pandora's box.

In other words, a Black woman can plausibly claim that she suffered discrimination because she is Black or a woman or

partly both. But not because she is a mega-oppressed unicorn.

- *A Black woman's oppression encompasses all forms of oppression.* Marx famously theorized that the proletariat incarnated all forms of human oppression such that its liberation would entail the liberation of all humankind: "the emancipation of the workers contains universal emancipation."[96] Crenshaw bestows this distinction on Black women: they constitute the "class … which, because of its intersectionality, is best able to challenge all forms of discrimination." Because Black women are allegedly at the bottom of the heap of human oppression, the liberation of Black women will in theory liberate everyone else. A "progressive" political strategy—what Crenshaw calls a "bottom-up" approach—should then prioritize Black women. Free them, and you free yourself. Put otherwise, if you're committed to human emancipation, you should not only not object but should positively rejoice if Black women are bumped to the head of the queue. Whatever its theoretical value,[97] the transactional value of this insight if you happen to be a Black woman (say, Crenshaw) standing in line shouldn't be underestimated. But there's more. Crenshaw evinces pique that white feminists pretend to speak for Black women.[98] She seems less concerned or, for that matter, even conscious that a high-achieving Black woman speaking for Black *working-class* women might also be problematic: that their respective oppressions might not exactly, or even nearly, overlap. She admonishes "white females" as they "were able to gain entry into previously all white male enclaves not through bringing about a fundamental reordering of male versus female work, but in large part by shifting their 'female' responsibilities to poor and minority women." Don't privileged Black females also shift their "female" responsibilities to poor and minority women?

She chides "white middle-class" feminism as it "placed white middle-class problems at the center of feminism." But haven't Black middle-class feminists placed Black middle-class problems at the center of *their* feminism? Crenshaw conspicuously omits class in her dissection of oppression.[99] As it happens, she attended Cornell University as an undergraduate and then Harvard Law School. In her seminal article on intersectionality, Crenshaw describes in vivid detail her most harrowing experience of intersectional oppression. She had formed a study group at Harvard with a pair of Black male law students. One of these students belonged to an exclusive male eating club. He invited her and the other Black male for drinks. When the two of them showed up at the club, the Black male was able to enter through the front door but, as it was an all-male eating club, she had to enter through the back door. "I entertained the idea," Crenshaw recalls, "of making a scene to dramatize the fact that my humiliation as a female was no less painful and my exclusion no more excusable than had we all been sent to the back door because we were Black." In other words, even if she wasn't intersectionally oppressed, it still *felt* awfully intersectional. (On second thought, she prudently decided to stay mum.) Dare it be said that Crenshaw's martyrdom on that God-forsaken night doesn't quite measure up (or down) to the quotidian horrors faced by a homeless, undocumented, unemployed or minimum-wage-earning woman of color? Crenshaw exhorts "feminism" to "include an analysis of race if it hopes to express the aspirations of non-white women." But mustn't it also include an analysis of class if it hopes to express the aspirations of non-white working-class women? In sum, not all Black women are at the bottom of the heap and not all white women are at the top; Black women don't encompass all forms

> of oppression; they shouldn't inherently be bumped to the head of the queue. Crenshaw's "intersectionality," which "centers" race and sex but "erases" class, reduces to ideology masking economic privilege. Moreover, Crenshaw positions herself athwart her sisters of color *and not-privileged-class*. In another path-breaking article, Crenshaw recalls her "field research" and "field study." She was teaching at U.C.LA. Law School. She visited a battered women's shelter located in a Los Angeles "minority" community that serviced "unemployed" and "poor" women. *That*, she calls "field" work. Indeed, it went way beyond Margaret Mead heading off to Samoa. Crenshaw was entering the *heart of darkness*. Did she remember to pack her Lord & Taylor pith helmet?[100]

Ember, it will be recalled, proclaimed that identity politics had superseded and surpassed Sanders' class agenda. She then quoted Crenshaw: "You basically have a moment where every corporation worth its salt is saying something about structural racism and anti-Blackness, and that stuff is even outdistancing what candidates in the Democratic Party were actually saying." Consider, then, Jeff Bezos' high-profile role. He did issue a denunciation of racism, post a "Black Lives Matter" banner on Amazon's website, commit $10 million—out of his $100 billion—to fighting racism, and declare Juneteenth a company holiday. But is that "outdistancing" Bernie's platform of Medicare for All, raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour, eliminating college tuition, and abolishing student debt? Perhaps so, if you're not stuck in a poverty-wage, benefits-free, dead-end job in an Amazon warehouse.

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Chapter 3

Ta-Nehisi Coates Demands Reparations, Sort Of

Not long after George Floyd's murder, the Democratic Party went positively native. Draped in Ralph Lauren's new line of *Kunta Kinte* tribal prayer shawls, Congressional Democrats on cue took a knee. (In a major strategic blunder, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wore her matching pair of Giuseppe Zanotti 2.0 stiletto heels and couldn't get up.[101]) The first night of the 2020 Democratic National Convention featured George Floyd's relatives who—however dignified in their own rights—couldn't but come across as woke props. Already before Floyd's murder, the *New York Times* had reinvented itself as storm-center of The Resistance. In 2019, the weekend magazine featured a multipart series on "the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery," the aim of which was to "reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative." Once the Newspaper of Record, it was reduced after the streets lit up to a headline-grabbing tabloid. Every day for months, its homepage was evenly divided between stories, invariably tilted against Trump, on Covid-19 and the George Floyd protests. The *Times* was now so woke, it put you right to sleep. Once notorious for not reporting mass demonstrations that rocked the boat, it now couldn't get enough of them. The coverage could not be said to be objective but, amazingly, the bias was *in favor of* the demonstrators.[102] Meanwhile, another weekend feature chronicled the life and death of Breonna Taylor, who also fell victim to killer cops. It was as if the post office had mixed up delivery of the *Times* with *Ebony* magazine. The *Times* editorial board

went so far as to chastise New York City Mayor de Blasio and New York State Governor Cuomo for being soft on police brutality.[103] The only thing missing was the headline, "Off the Pigs!" with a photo of the editors raising their clenched fists. Not even the slogan "Defund the police!" and the toppling of monuments fazed the Gray Lady.[104] Did the leopard change its spots, or was the woke crowd holding back until after election day to remind the hoi polloi, if and when mass popular insurgency broke out, who's in charge?[105] The *Times* weekend magazine also resurrected the demand for Black reparations[106] that was set forth earlier by Ta-Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic*.[107] It's worth pausing to ask the question, *Is this demand radical or radical chic?* The African-American call for reparations has a long, checkered history. One of the inspirational leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.),[108] James Forman, famously seized the pulpit of New York City's Riverside Church in 1969 to read out a *Black Manifesto.* He called upon "Christian white churches and Jewish synagogues" to hand over $500 million as recompense for their "exploitation of colored peoples around the world." He called upon Black people "to commence the disruption of the racist churches and synagogues throughout the United States."[109] He called upon "forces" in the white community to "work under the leadership of blacks … [to] demonstrate concretely that they are willing to fight the white skin privilege and the white supremacy and racism which has forced us as black people to make these demands." The *Manifesto* reached a typical '60s crescendo: "ALL ROADS MUST LEAD TO REVOLUTION! UNITE WITH WHOMEVER YOU CAN UNITE! NEUTRALIZE WHEREVER POSSIBLE! FIGHT OUR ENEMIES RELENTLESSLY! VICTORY TO THE PEOPLE!" (etc.). Even to a sympathetic reader of his autobiography, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (1972), Forman comes across in his recounting of this episode as a street hustler bursting on the scene out of nowhere to milk dry bleeding-heart—not

to mention frightened—white liberals. It was a James Forman meets Al Sharpton moment. He deserved better than this self-staged last act.

Whereas in the past the demand for reparations typically got ephemeral notice, Coates' *Atlantic* article found broad resonance as it was published in a prestigious journal. To be sure, Coates did not lay out an action plan or, for that matter, any political agenda. Instead he sketched an evocative *tour d'horizon*, punctuated by personal testimonies, of the many-sided super-exploitation of African-Americans from chattel slavery right up to the post-World War II housing market. If he were merely making a moral appeal, justice would surely be on his side. But Coates represented his "case" as a practical initiative. The obvious question is, Why should one expect Coates' case to carry the day in the court of public opinion and halls of Congress where so many others preceding him have failed? He himself acknowledged that a bill calling on Congress merely to investigate the possibility of Black reparations has languished in committee for decades. Indeed, the reparations demand has never galvanized a mass movement even in the Black community, whether it be because political priority has attached to more pressing concerns,[110] or because prizing out of Congress who-knows-how-many-hundreds-of-billions-of-dollars to compensate Black people for four hundred years of exploitation appeared to be a bridge too far.[111] But Coates imagines it's an idea whose time has now come. His optimism rests on a pair of suppositions:

- *If white Americans feel, or can be made to feel, guilty for impoverishing Black America, then they will embrace reparations as a release from this insupportable psychic pain.*
  "What is needed," Coates prescribes, "is an airing of family secrets, a settling with old ghosts. What is needed is a healing of the American psyche and the banishment of white guilt…. What I'm talking about is a national reckoning that would lead

to spiritual renewal." In other words, he invites white America to sign up for a three-step recovery program to overcome its "intoxication" of denial:

> Step 1. A national conversation about race;
> Step 2. A cathartic acknowledgement by whites of the massive theft they committed;
> Step 3. The bestowal of Black reparations as an act of collective white expiation.

It might be deflating, even depressing, but the truth of the matter is: white people don't—and it's doubtful they ever will—feel a burning necessity to heal this putative psychic wound or banish this putative guilt. A recent study found that "Americans are largely unaware of the striking persistence of racial economic inequality in the United States."[112] Even were they enlightened, whites could still draw on a vast arsenal of prejudices to rationalize it away—*If Blacks live in poverty, it's because they're lazy and loose*—or alibis to exonerate themselves of personal culpability—*What did I have to do with slavery?* Even as a poll in the wake of George Floyd's lynching found that 71 percent of white Americans believed "racial and ethnic discrimination is a big problem," a huge gap would need to be closed before the categorical imperative put them in a "gift"-giving spirit. The fact is, most white people are themselves just barely staying afloat. But didn't the Civil Rights Movement, which demanded a massive redistribution of, if not economic, then political power, garner white support? Its achievements, however, sprang from the perfect convergence of a quartet of factors. *First*, Blacks demonstrated en masse a resolve—*come what may*—to eradicate the system of Jim Crow. *Second*, the protesters' demands were anchored squarely in the bedrock law of the land. *Third*, amid the "propaganda" Cold War with the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the political emergence of

the "colored" Third World, on the other, the White House couldn't afford to ignore the images of sanguinary racist infliction being transmitted abroad. *Fourth*, white Northerners sympathized, or were shamed into sympathizing, with the nonviolent protesters' demands[113] and—further to this point—these Northern liberals could occupy the high seat of moral judgment without personal sacrifice, as the full burden of the original Civil Rights agenda was to be borne "down South." Compare the call for Black reparations. It hasn't come close to igniting a fervent popular movement; a legal right to some financial reparations might eventually be conceded in the courts, but the moral resonance of such a right doesn't remotely approach that of the concrete, constitutive, and Constitutionally-based rights of suffrage and access to public accommodations; were it to ignore the reparations demand, the national government wouldn't catch any flak abroad; and the likelihood of winning white or Congressional support—a "national reckoning" measured in mega buckets of dollars—is nil. Indeed, if the early Civil Rights Movement flourished while the later phase floundered, it's perhaps because, even amid the spiritual headiness and booming prosperity of the 1960s, largesse crashed up against egotistical love of lucre. "It is now a struggle for genuine equality on all levels, and this will be a much more difficult struggle," Martin Luther King foresaw in 1967.

> You see, the gains in the first period, or the first era of struggle, were obtained from the power structure at bargain rates; it didn't cost the nation anything to integrate lunch counters. It didn't cost the nation anything to integrate hotels and motels. It didn't cost the nation a penny to guarantee the right to vote. Now we are in a period where it will cost the nation billions of dollars to get rid of poverty, to get rid of slums, to make quality integrated education a reality. This is where we are now. Now we're going to lose some friends in this period. The allies who were with us in Selma will not all stay with us during this period.

Is it really plausible that, in these by comparison morally calloused and economically straitened times, white Americans will undergo a spiritual epiphany such that they will seek atonement for their ill-gotten gains by writing out a blank check to Black America?[114] The ultimate irony is, Coates posits that racism is entrenched in the innermost recesses of the innermost sanctums of the White Mind[115]—a dybbuk—yet he also posits that it can be extirpated by a nationally televised Oprah extravaganza.

- *If the State of Israel could extract reparations from the German government after the Nazi holocaust even despite popular German opposition, Blacks can also extract reparations for the horrors they endured.*

  To sustain the tenability of his proposal, Coates invokes the precedent of the reparations Germany paid out to Israel right after the Nazi holocaust. But Germany had just lost a war; the spectral and skeletal victims of its barbarism still haunted Europe's landscape. To restore Germany's good name and its esteemed station in Western civilization, the German government resolved on the dramatic gesture of reparations. It's hard to figure how this episode "should be instructive to us." Does Coates really imagine that, in the wake of his "national reckoning," there before an unforgiving Humanity will lie white America, prostrate, exposed and mortified, desperate to redeem its moral standing in the world at almost any price? The more recent chapter in Holocaust reparations, however, does provide an "instructive" precedent.[116] In the mid-1990s, World Jewish Congress (W.J.C.) president Edgar Bronfman, alongside a gang of crooked Jewish lawyers, crooked Jewish politicians, and crooked Jewish communal leaders, acted in cahoots with the Bill Clinton administration to perpetrate a shakedown of

Europe in the name of "needy Holocaust victims."[117] The allegation that, for example, Jews who perished in the Nazi holocaust had deposited billions of dollars in Swiss banks and after the war their heirs couldn't withdraw the money was fabricated out of whole cloth. But by enlisting every level of U.S. power—from local city comptrollers all the way up to Clinton administration officials such as Stuart Eizenstat, as well as the President himself—this cabal of ghouls and grave-robbers brought to their knees Swiss bankers, and then other European countries, as they extorted billions of dollars. The "needy Holocaust victims" never saw more than a pittance of the loot. Instead, it poured into the coffers of Jewish communal organizations and pockets of Jewish lawyers. But then Divine Justice intervened. One by one, the Holocaust hucksters ended up in jail or publicly disgraced. It was revealed that sublimely slimy Rabbi Israel Singer, who orchestrated the Swiss shakedown via his chairman's office at the W.J.C., had, unbeknownst to anyone, squirreled away W.J.C. monies—ah, the delicious irony—in his own secret Swiss bank account. The indignant president (Bronfman) then fired the pilferer chairman (Singer): "Israel helped himself to cash from the W.J.C. office, my cash." Of course, "my cash"—at any rate, the extorted portion of it—belonged not to him but, first, the Swiss banks; second, Holocaust victims; and third, no one. New York State comptroller Alan Hevesi, who had threatened to withhold pension fund investments in Swiss banks, was thrown behind bars for enriching himself from a "pay to play" pension fund kickback scheme. The lead shakedown lawyer, Burt Neuborne, piously proclaimed to everyone within earshot that he was donating his services pro bono in memory of his daughter who had passed prematurely while attending rabbinical school. It

turned out that this Holocaust huckster had raked in a cool *eight million plus dollars* for his "pro bono" services. In an unprecedented editorial, the *New York Times* rebuked Neuborne for "billing for 30.5 hours of work in a single day" and for "the hourly rate Mr. Neuborne put in for, $700." Each having committed sundry crimes and misdemeanors, Holocaust huckster lawyer Edward Fagan was disbarred while huckster lawyer Melvyn Weiss served time. The Jewish Claims Conference, which was headed by Singer and mandated to distribute the Holocaust booty to "needy Holocaust victims," was wracked by one public scandal after another of insider theft. Were Coates' case successfully prosecuted, it wouldn't surprise, at all, if in this revival of the Reparations Reckoning, Reverend Al Sharpton stands in for Rabbi Israel Singer, and Sharpton's National Action Network for the Jewish Claims Conference. As Black reparations hucksters queue up buckets in hand to cash in, it will be a veritable miracle on 34th Street if the well doesn't run dry long before "needy Black victims" taste a drop from it. On the other hand, Coates nobly aspires to a national conversation about race that will provoke deep soul-searching in white America. But if he has homed in on financial remuneration as the purpose and goal of this exercise, it cannot but provoke deep skepticism among white interlocutors: is this just another tugging-at-one's-heartstrings extortion racket? The Holocaust hucksters used to ceaselessly drone that reparations were "about truth and justice, not about money." "It's not about money," the jaded Swiss agreed. "It's about more money."

Ultimately, Coates himself doesn't appear persuaded that his case will yield much beyond token monetary concessions: "Perhaps after a serious discussion and debate, … we may find that the country can never fully repay African-Americans. But we stand to discover much

about ourselves in such a discussion…. I believe that wrestling publicly with these questions matters as much as—if not more than—the specific [dollar amount] answers that might be produced." In other words, if not serious compensation, then let's at least have a serious conversation. Might this be why his article was featured in a coveted literati publication and why he's a hot-ticket item on the woke circuit? Jeffrey Goldberg is editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic*. In the 1990s, Goldberg served as an accessory to torture of Palestinians in an Israeli prison. He even memorialized his heroic service in an acclaimed book.[118] (Like the rapist who purports that "she asked for it," Goldberg said of his victims that they "want to be" tortured.) He then served as chief stenographer for white Jewish supremacist Benjamin Netanyahu in the American media. Goldberg was elevated in 2016 to *The Atlantic*'s top post; Coates, basking in the glory of "The Case," was Goldberg's "national correspondent." "Jeff" and his homeboy "T" seemed to have gotten on famously, a mutual-admiration, kissing-cousins lovefest.[119] Why would Goldberg, of all people, showcase a "Black militant" whose signature issue was reparations? Was Goldberg so tormented by white guilt that he was ready to embrace a massive transfer of wealth to Black people? Or did this racist sack of shit reckon that even—or *especially*—as reparations was politically a dead letter, Coates' musings made for a terrific idle-chatter item that, to boot, burnished *The Atlantic*'s woke bona fides? Indeed, one could judge the good faith of Coates' fan club on Martha's Vineyard by the venomousness with which these slithering social justice warriors assailed Bernie Sanders as he called for massive wealth redistribution. Or, alternately, they cancelled him. As *New York Times* journalists lined up to sign the *Harper's* petition decrying cancel culture, the irony was, the single most cancelled person the year gone by was Sanders, while the *Times* led the pack in cancelling him.[120] His campaign was whited out except when an occasion arose to asperse him. But that's

not all, far from it. The woke Democratic Party weaponized Black reparations as a Trojan horse to derail the movement Bernie set in motion. Aspiring to cobble together a coalition of the 99 percent, Sanders advocated universal programs that would benefit *all* the have-nots. It was in the nature of things, however, that African-Americans would be the prime beneficiaries of Bernie's platform as they were least able to afford health insurance and higher education, and most in need of jobs:

> What we should be talking about is making massive investments in rebuilding our cities, in creating millions of decent paying jobs, in making public colleges and universities tuition-free, basically targeting our federal resources to the areas where it is needed the most and where it is needed the most is in impoverished communities, often African American and Latino.

Still, the woke crowd hounded Bernie with the question, "Do you support Black reparations?" As if answering No proved he was a racist.[121] If he did reply in the negative, it was because answering Yes would have estranged his potential supporters in the white working class. If woke Democratic Party hacks could afford to answer Yes, it was because they had already written off a wide swathe of white workers. It was a lose-lose proposition for Sanders: if he came out in favor of reparations, it would drastically shrink the coalition he hoped to build; if he came out against them, he would stand accused of a "blind spot" on race. Blind spot? Was the chimera of Black reparations —touted by Democratic Party con-artists who knew full well that a substantive reparations bill was dead-on-arrival—really to be preferred over the prospect of free health care, free higher education, and a living-wage job? It might be contended that neither program was a realistic possibility. But it's not an accident that the Democratic Party woke elite, hell-bent against wealth redistribution, entertained Coates' proposal[122] while demonizing Sanders' platform. If they didn't fear Coates' call for massive Black reparations, but dreaded Sanders'

call for massive wealth redistribution, wasn't it because they reckoned reparations a pipedream but redistribution, behind which stood a militant mass movement, a nightmare? Wittingly or not, by elevating Black reparations to a litmus test, by flagellating Sanders for failing it —

> Sanders should be directly confronted and asked why his political imagination is so active against plutocracy, but so limited against white supremacy[123]

—Coates played right into a cynical ploy of the one percent to stop Sanders by race-baiting him.[124]

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Chapter 4

Robin DiAngelo Kicks Karen's Butt

One of the most influential tracts to emerge from the identity politics movement is Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*.[125] It rapidly climbed onto the *New York Times* bestseller list after its publication in 2018, remaining there for over a year, and its popularity then resurged after the killing of George Floyd.

While DiAngelo locates the source of racism in social structures, *White Fragility* fits snugly in the self-help section of a bookstore. Except for a couple of stray sentence fragments, DiAngelo has nothing whatsoever to say about transforming institutions. Instead, racism is depicted as a mental disorder, and its cure as a sustained mental regimen supervised by an expert therapist, preferably DiAngelo (for a fee, of course). The interest of her mishmash of words—the whole of my being revolts at denoting it a *book*—lies less in her pretense of an argument than in this thing as a cultural datum: Why did *White Fragility* become a national phenomenon, the go-to text of identity politics? I will return to this question presently. First, however, I must drag the reader through the slog of parsing *White Fragility*. I confess to a certain reluctance. It feels akin to child abuse. It brings to mind a public service announcement from the 1960s: "Mental Illness: Sympathize, Don't Criticize." But were I to stop here, it might be said that my curt dismissal of DiAngelo springs from my own … white fragility. So, begging the reader's forgiveness, here it goes.

DiAngelo repeatedly describes racism as "complex" and "nuanced." The problem is that her analysis of racism is neither. It is all of a piece.

She doesn't paint in broad strokes; she paints in *one* stroke. Racism, DiAngelo posits, quoting a fellow diversity consultant, permeates every nook and cranny of society: "Racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality."[126] You might be aware, you might be unaware, but it's there: "We might think of conscious racial awareness as the tip of an iceberg…. Racial bias is largely unconscious."[127] It contaminates every thought and interracial relationship: "no cross-racial relationship is free from the dynamics of racism."[128] If you don't or if you do have Black friends, you're a racist. "The sad fact is many whites have no cross-racial friendships at all…. But even those that have cross-racial friendships" aren't immune to "the dynamics of racism in the society at large."[129] Even if you and your Black friend "don't talk about racism, [it] does not mean it isn't at play. Indeed, this silence is one of the ways that racism is manifest, for it is an imposed silence."[130] If you profess to be "color-blind" or if you profess to "color-celebrate," you're either way a racist, as both are "typical white racial claims."[131] If you don't shed tears at the murder of a Black person, you're a racist, but if you do shed tears in the company of Black people, that would be "effectively reinscribing rather than ameliorating [sic] racism."[132] If you shout or abjure the n-word, you're a racist.[133] If you protest that you aren't a racist, that itself is proof positive that you are one. Even if, hypothetically, your mind were rinsed clean of racism, you're still a racist, as you objectively benefit from a system that privileges white people. Racism is ubiquitous and inescapable: "Everyone has prejudice, and everyone discriminates."[134] It is zeitgeist and cross. You can run, as Joe Louis famously said (wasn't it racist to invoke his name?), but you can't hide.

It's not so much that DiAngelo's panorama of race relations in the U.S. is wholly wrong—however much it might be wished otherwise, racism does interpolate so many facets of our existence—as that it is

so Manichaean and ultimately paranoid. "As a sociologist," DiAngelo boldly states, "I am quite comfortable generalizing."[135] Is she ever. If you're white, you've been branded—and, like the mark of Cain, it's only the brand that counts; everything else is beside the point. If you're Abraham Lincoln or Jefferson Davis; if you're John Brown or Simon Legree; if you're seeking to overthrow or to buttress a system of racial privilege; if you're wrestling with or acquiescing in your demons; if you're a fascist or an anti-fascist; if you're on one side or the other in Charlottesville—it makes no difference; if you're white, you're a racist. If a white person utters something that offends a Black person, the white person is never misunderstood or the Black person mistaken. The white interlocutor is literally *always* a guilty-as-Lucifer racist, the Black person a pure-as-Jesus victim. In the books DiAngelo keeps, *every* white person[136] is listed in the debit column. Racism isn't a factor in the equation, it is, always and everywhere, the only factor. If you love listening to Mahalia Jackson sing "Elijah Rock," The Four Tops sing "I'll Be There," and the Shirelles sing "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?," if they strike a chord in your heart and touch a place in your soul, but if also and at the same time, however reluctantly, you harbor racial stereotypes: you're just a racist; it's that short and simple. In DiAngelo's dystopian conjuring, you must ever be on guard, not against Big Brother, but against your inner racist demon that, unbeknownst to you and beyond your control, lurks in the ebony-most recesses of your mind, lying at the ready to leap forth and, like a bigoted neutron bomb, stamp out of existence every Black person in its proximity. And yet, it's DiAngelo's morbidly obsessive diagnosis of racism, it's the psychopathic phantasmagoria in which she's ensconced herself and wants to corral the rest of us, that renders its eradication impossible. If racism is so immovably entrenched in our psyches and structures; if it grips us like a peregrine falcon's talons; if it is, like the air we breathe and the water we drink, so all-encompassing;

if it is even, in the absence of human intention and intervention, "reproduced automatically"[137]—then, truly, it can't ever be eradicated. And if, DiAngelo-like, you cling to and clutch it as if a (social?) security blanket even as you feign "interrupting" it, if you discount a priori even the possibility, however evanescent, of a racism-free breathing space, of a *human* exchange inserted between parentheses, it *won't* disappear. In DiAngelo's constricted, claustrophobic moral universe, nothing much happens except racism: "We must continue to ask *how* our racism manifests, not *if*" (emphases in original).[138] She is the monomaniacal Captain Ahab in pursuit of the White Whale. She is little Jackie Paper out to slay Puff the Racist Dragon. Her palette comprises two colors—white and black—and her canvas one color scheme—white over black. She is the bulimic sourpuss in Mike Leigh's "Life is Sweet" who snaps "racist" when her sister harmlessly puns on a word.[139] What an unremitting, remorseless, insufferable bore! Who, by the way, would choose to be in the company of a one-trick antiracist pony nonstop expostulating on her or everyone else's racism?

When I espy a full moon,
I can't help but see
The *white* orb
Silencing
Erasing
Invalidating
The *Black* heavens.
Racism, how do I loathe thee?
Let me count the ways.[140]

And, by the by, if racist microbes have so diseased white people and so desolated Black people; if racism were the sum total, not just a part (albeit a critical part), of our collective racial experience—which also includes our give-and-take banter in the locker room and our common bereavement at a workmate's passing and our common vote for a

Black presidential candidate; if race relations were only lethal and not also sometimes benign, and sometimes even ridiculous: if the picture of race in America were so monochromatically lachrymose, it's cause for wonder how Richard Pryor or Chris Rock could *laugh* at it and make us—all of us, white and Black—laugh too. (God help us if YouTube appoints DiAngelo its race consultant.)

But DiAngelo isn't just a dullard possessed. She's positively a *menace*. As if a Lavrentiy Beria wannabe, DiAngelo is on the prowl 24/7, bracing herself to pounce on, if not bourgeois class enemies, then white racist enemies; to ferret out even those who "subjectively" don't harbor an errant thought but still "objectively" serve the nefarious cause, if not of bourgeois supremacy, then of white supremacy. Once having exposed the race (before it was *class*) enemy, DiAngelo orchestrates a group "session," a Purge Trial, to gently minister, like the most refined of torturers, her thoughtful "feedback," so as to publicly humiliate and degrade participants as she chews them up and spits them out, for their own good, of course, until finally, kneeling in contrition, begging for forgiveness, screaming for surcease, they admit it, they blubber out:

I'm a racist!
I'm a racist!
Thank you Jesus!
Thank you Comrade Stalin!
Thank you Chairman Mao!
Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, Coach DiAngelo!
I've seen the light!
Hallelujah!
I'm a sinner no more!

At least, not until Coach DiAngelo turns up at your company's doorstep to conduct another "session." For she doesn't believe racism can be vanquished[141] while, her protestations notwithstanding (two can play the same game…), it's most doubtful that she wants to

vanquish it. Chuck the Civil Rights Movement, her anthem is: *We shan't overcome, not on my watch, goddamn it! Get me to the bank on time!* It might, incidentally, be asked, if racism is buried irretrievably and irrevocably in the labyrinthine chambers of our interior cyberspace, and if it replicates itself in structures and institutions even absent human intercession, then what's the point of her coaching? However kickass her "sessions," DiAngelo plainly can no more "interrupt" racism than a twig can "interrupt" an oncoming locomotive. Shouldn't she counsel her clients that the fee she charges would be better spent feeding little brown babies in Africa? (I know, *racist*.)

Where does racism come from? "Enormous economic interests."[142] It has served to "legitimize" the enslavement of Black people and their super-exploitation right up to the present. It sustains white privilege and buffers white guilt over it:

> Anti-blackness comes from deep guilt about what we have done and continue to do; the unbearable knowledge of our complicity with the profound torture of black people from past to present…. Our projections allow us to bury this trauma by dehumanizing and then blaming the victim. If blacks are not human in the same ways that we white people are human, our mistreatment of them doesn't count. We are not guilty; they are. If they are bad, it isn't unfair. In fact, it is *righteous*…. To put it bluntly, I believe that the white collective fundamentally hates blackness for what it reminds us of: that we are capable and guilty of perpetrating immeasurable harm and that our gains come through the subjugation of others. (emphasis in original)[143]

DiAngelo's "analysis" is not exactly original and she contributes not a jot beyond these oh-so-tired clichés. Still, it does pose some intriguing questions. *White Fragility* is presented as a successful therapy to "interrupt" racism. It's a three-step sequence:

1. The "diversity trainer" directly confronts the white subjects' racism.
2. The subjects resort to defensive tactics—what DiAngelo dubs "white fragility"—to deflect and neutralize the accusations,[144] be

it by shouting, pouting, crying, or exiting in a huff, in order to "protect, maintain, and reproduce white supremacy."[145]

3. The "diversity trainer" advises the white subjects how to "build up" their "racial stamina"[146] so as to tolerate further verbal blows—"feedback"[147]—from her until they come to acquiesce with "racial humility" in the truth of their racism.

Here's the baffling question: Except to get the damn "sessions" over with, why would the white subjects confess? The genesis, purpose, and objective—the raison d'être—of racism has allegedly been to preserve and buttress the "enormous economic interests" of "white privilege." What, then, is the motive of white people to repudiate a system that has fantastically enriched them? "Without white people's interest or effort invested in changing a system that serves them at the expense of others," DiAngelo observes, "advantage is passed down from generation to generation."[148] But, if the system "serves them at the expense of others," why would they want to change it or not want to pass it down to their children? It can't be shame. It's hard to conceive Donald Trump being embarrassed at enriching himself on the backs of Black people. It can't be fear of ostracism. If whites collectively profit from racism, then, according to DiAngelo, they also stick by each other in "white solidarity."[149] It can't be conscience. Racism penetrates so deeply into our psyche that, according to DiAngelo, we aren't even aware of it, and, resilient as is our denial mechanism, it would appear we can't be made aware of it. Even if we could be, would having guilt trump having gold, would pity trump privilege? Would DiAngelo's "feedback" so psychologically devastate Trump that he'd hand over his hotels to Black Lives Matter and his golf courses to the Nation of Islam? DiAngelo entreats white people to "take responsibility for our racism."[150] But why would they take responsibility if the price were disgorgement of their riches? "Because they benefit us," DiAngelo writes, "racially inequitable relations are comfortable for most white

people. Consequently, if we whites want to interrupt this system, we have to get racially *uncomfortable* and be willing to examine the effects of our racial engagement" (emphasis in original).[151] But if it "benefits us," why would we want to "interrupt this system" and get "*uncomfortable*" with racism? Put simply, if white people invented racism to justify their ill-gotten gains, why would they then proceed to disinvent it? It would appear much more likely that, if racism serves the interests of "white people," they won't voluntarily let go of it, however many of DiAngelo's "sessions" they must endure. Except for her "sessions" that "interrupt" it, DiAngelo has precious little to say about how to mitigate racism, let alone overcome it. She counsels her white audience to "get educated," "build relationships" with "people of color," and "find out for themselves what they can do."[152] As to those manifold institutions and structures that are saturated with racism, and that reproduce it even absent human intention or intervention, as if a racially programmed *motum perpetuum machina*, the ever-dour DiAngelo suddenly turns positively Panglossian as she predicts that, after completing her therapy, "not only would our interpersonal relationships change, but so would our institutions."[153] We'll presumably all hold hands, chant Om, sing six rounds of Kumbaya and then, brick by brick, dismantle the racist system that's enriched us for centuries. It's really that simple.

Still, until we reach the Promised Land, it's an awful bleak landscape. To paraphrase that old McGuire Sisters standby, it's

Racism in the morning,
Racism in the evening,
Racism at suppertime.

But have no fear! Don't despair! Never say die! There's a silver lining in the nimbus cloud, a tremulous ray of hope piercing the darkness, a sliver of redemptive possibility. It's Robin DiAngelo to the rescue! She will lead us out of the desert of white fragility. Granted she might not

quite be Moses. But DiAngelo's as central to and inseparable from her mission as, well, as Sun Myung Moon was to the Unification Church, Jim Jones was to the People's Temple, and Werner Erhard was to EST. DiAngelo represents herself in *White Fragility* as sharp as a tack, down as a soul sister, and tough as nails. But is she? She says that "most white people have limited information about what racism is and how it works" and that "the goal of antiracist work is to identify and challenge racism and *the misinformation that supports it*" (emphasis in original).[154] But what exactly makes DiAngelo qualified for this undertaking? Her formal credentials don't exactly overwhelm. She earned her PhD in "Multicultural Education" at the University of Washington, was tenured at Westfield State University, and specializes in "Whiteness Studies." To be frank (as DiAngelo exhorts), I wasn't aware one could get a PhD in "Multicultural Education," I've never heard of Westfield State University, and Whiteness Studies is as much an academic discipline as Hula-Hoop Studies.[155] Her chief academic attainment appears to be that she "coined the term *White Fragility*." As an epistemological breakthrough, it ranks right up there with the (apropos) coinage of *yo-yo*. DiAngelo calls herself a "sociologist" but, so far as formal credentials goes, she might just as well call herself a particle physicist. The scholarly citations in *White Fragility* consist largely of flaky articles published by flaky journals and flaky presses.[156] Her text is littered with observations that give pause as to her mental poise. She purports that "I can get through graduate school without ever discussing racism. I can graduate from law school without ever discussing racism."[157] I suppose this might be true if she cut all her classes or was on crack while in class. She states that Jackie Robinson is depicted in our national "story line" not as the first Black player to break the major-league color line but as the first Black qualified enough to play in the majors.[158] Maybe so, if she consulted the *K.K.K. Guide to American Baseball*. She recalls this "cogent example of white

fragility": when a recalcitrant white member in her "session" suffered a "potentially fatal" heart attack, the group's attention turned to this woman and "away from … the people of color." Indeed, in the cause of "interrupting" racism, what's a white casualty or two? She deplores "white women's tears" during "cross-racial interactions." Why? "[T]here is a long historical backdrop of black men being tortured and murdered because of a white woman's distress…. Our tears trigger the terrorism of this history."[159] White woman crying—White woman crying rape—Black man lynched: who wouldn't connect these dots? She entreats white people to "break the silence about race and racism with other white people."[160] White people talking to white people about racism: gee whiz, what a novel idea! DiAngelo anticipates that "white readers will have moments of discomfort reading this book."[161] Agreed. Not because they're "white readers," however, but because "this book" is so anguishingly stupid.

Okay, DiAngelo isn't the brightest light on the circuit or the sharpest tool in the shed, but maybe she possesses other exemplary qualities. Although she cautions her white audience not to think "you are different from other white people,"[162] and although she concedes her own "deep anti-black feelings that have been inculcated in me since childhood,"[163] DiAngelo doesn't shy away from placing herself on a higher plane or "further along" on a "continuum"[164] than your run-of-the-mill brainwashed blighted blanco.[165] Thus, she observes,

> I am seen as somewhat more racially aware than other whites.[166]

Her job description is to "raise the racial consciousness of whites" who refuse to "acknowledge that our race gives us advantages" and to "help individuals and organizations see how racism is manifesting itself in their practices and outcomes."[167] She laments "how fragile and ill-equipped most white people are to confront racial tensions."[168] DiAngelo herself is the extraordinary exception to the pathetic rule;

she's way ahead of the curve. "I am in a position to give white people feedback on how their unintentional racism is manifesting itself."[169] She helps you "see your racism"; she "make[s] visible the inevitable racist assumptions held and patterns displayed by white people"; she "discovered … how to give white people feedback on our inevitable and often unconscious racist assumptions."[170] But what enabled *her* to break free of the "inevitable racist assumptions"? Indeed, how would she even know if she had broken free of "often unconscious racist assumptions and patterns"? It yet more confounds that DiAngelo labels herself a "white progressive" and then goes on to say that "white progressives can be the most difficult for people of color" as "we think we have arrived" yet still "uphold and perpetrate racism."[171] By her own reckoning, she, a white progressive, would appear to be *least* racially self-aware and *least* qualified to "raise the racial consciousness of whites." In other words, beyond her own smug certitude, it's hard to fathom how DiAngelo could be any less racist than your standard-fare white trash. She herself says that whites who "explicitly avow racism" are "actually more aware of, and honest about, their biases than those of us who consider ourselves open-minded."[172]

From whence, then, spring DiAngelo's supra-racial superpowers? She notes that many whites have "no sustained relationships with people of color," while extant "cross-racial relationships" are not "authentic."[173] Her own, on the contrary, pass the authenticity test. DiAngelo is cut from the white-groupie mold. Sometimes this type be tough-as-nails, sometimes she be flower-child flaky, sometimes she be demure in a print floral, sometimes she be brazenly exposed or in form-fitting gear. Always, she be a coyly seductive white temptress. She be so down wit da hood dat she be speakin Ebonics like, girl, she be bawn into it. She be givin' fiery speeches at rallies in solidarity wit her "Black sista' and brotha'." Whereas "relationships with white people

tend to be less authentic for people of color,"[174] DiAngelo fancy dat peeps of color be trustin' her.

> Just before the gathering, a woman of color pulled me aside and told me that she wanted to attend but she was "in no mood for white women's tears today." I assured her that I would handle it.[175]

> [A woman of color] tells me that although these [racist] dynamics occur daily between white people and people of color, my willingness to repair doesn't, and that she appreciates this.[176]

Sis' DiAngelo be so hip, she be so chill, she be so fly, they'll "often give [her] a pass" on a racial slip.[177] But what make her be so unique? How she come to pozess "advanced skill" in navigating race relations? Is it cuz she be havin' Black coworkers? As it happens, so do most white Americans. Maybe she be hangin' out in the locka' room at half-time wit de Harlem Globetrotters. Dey all be havin' a jolly good time, dey be havin' lotta dem cross-cultural relations, praize de Lawd, Lawdy-lawd, I do declar'! But does that make her "more racially aware than other whites"? DiAngelo mocks the "insidious" racism of pseudo progressive whites who proclaim "I have friends of color, so I can't be racist."[178] Fair enough. But what shingle be hangin' on her front lawn if not "Some of my best friends be peeps of culla"? DiAngelo don't just be chillin' with Black folk. She don't just be Jezebel on the back porch listenin' to her plantation darkies sing 'em spirituals. She be protectin' Black folk as she "can certainly bear the brunt of a hostile response less painfully than people of color."[179] And she be *knowin'* Black folk; she be havin' a special pipeline to dem; she be channelin' dem. She might not be Rachel Dolezal passin' as Black, but DiAngelo be her first cuzzin speakin' to white people in her Whoopi Goldberg faux dreads what Black folk be feelin'.[180] *White Fragility* is peppered with these Black-knowing asides: "Having to navigate white people's … racial superiority is a great psychic drain for people of color"; "People of color certainly experience white solidarity as a form of racism";

"The following example illustrates … the frustration that people of color feel"; "For people of color, our tears demonstrate our racial insulation and privilege"; "Trying to explain away our racism does not fool people of color"; and on and on.[181]

It's hard to say which grates more: that DiAngelo presumes to be privy to what Blacks feel or that she presumes to be privy to what *all* Blacks feel. In the meantime, DiAngelo admonishes white people to show "humility" when they talk about race;[182] she rues that "white Northerners who came down South to save black people had some patronizing or condescending attitudes"; she chastises the "racism" of a white woman who presumed that "she could best speak for a black man"; she cautions those whites who believe that they are "different from other white people" on race matters to "stop and take a breath."[183] Speaking of which, it takes one's breath away the lack of self-awareness of this coach in self-awareness. DiAngelo psychoanalyzes that white racism can wear the mask of benevolence as "we also use blacks to feel warmhearted and noble. We are drawn to those who … we can 'save' from the horrors of their black lives with our abundance and kindness." She goes on to observe that in one strain of racist ideology, "white people are the saviors of black people … noble, courageous, and morally superior to other whites."[184] It is a tribute to the power of self-righteous purblindness that DiAngelo doesn't see the irony in these words. In her antiracist rage, DiAngelo can also be unintentionally revealing of the white demons astir in her intracranial space. She tells the convoluted story of a white couple who reportedly purchased an inexpensive home and then a handgun. The upshot? "I immediately knew they had bought a home in a black neighborhood." This brilliant deduction doesn't prevent DiAngelo in the next breath from decrying white racism that "associated crime with people of color" and that assumes "black neighborhoods are inherently dangerous and criminal."[185] Didn't she just do that? She

tells another anecdote about academic colleagues at her new job who caution her against moving into certain neighborhoods. "I now knew where the people of color were concentrated."[186] It did turn out these areas were half non-white, but maybe they were also high-crime areas. It's not always and only about race—unless you're a racist. She excoriates "the glee the white collective derives from blackface and depictions of blacks as apes and gorillas."[187] How can the "white collective" not include *her*, or is she depersonalizing and distancing herself from her own demons by projecting them onto the "white collective"? One can't help but recall Jean-Paul Sartre's description of the antisemite who, as it were, gets off on his own obscene desires while he denounces Jews:

> He can glut himself to the point of obsession with the recital of obscene or criminal actions which excite and satisfy his perverse leanings; but since at the same time he attributes them to those infamous Jews on whom he heaps his scorn, he satisfies himself without being compromised.

Replace "Jews" with "whites," and, voilà, you have DiAngelo. While inveighing against the manifold perversions of those awful white people—they delight in grotesque images of Blacks as apes and gorillas—she excites and satisfies her *own* depraved leanings "without being compromised." It doesn't seem impertinent at this juncture to wonder if DiAngelo is the best choice for "diversity trainer." It is also cause for wonder why Black people even need her. Her function in a typical meeting is to provide "feedback" to white members of the group as to why Black group members find this or that remark of theirs to be racist. Are Black people so inarticulate, so *fragile*, that they need DiAngelo to act as their interlocutor? It might also be wondered whether Black participants are nearly as thin-skinned and hypersensitive as she makes them out to be. Unlike DiAngelo, they aren't paid per microaggression.

* * *

Robin DiAngelo gives snake-oil salesmen a bad name. Yet *White Fragility* sat on the *New York Times* bestseller list for close to two years and has sold nearly a million copies. She's a hot-ticket item on the lecture circuit and the toast of the town. She wowed host Jimmy Fallon on the *Tonight Show*. In the immortal lyrics of Marvin Gaye, What's going on? The DiAngelo template performs for the powers-that-be the useful function of pretending to fight racism while leaving all the institutions and structures sustaining it intact. An interracial group of employees gathers; DiAngelo, the Avenging Angel of African-American Affliction, dishes out "feedback" to the assembled whites; the Karens tear up, the white dudes lash back; DiAngelo delivers another round of "feedback." The exercise keeps repeating for an hour. Bingo! Racism has been "interrupted." This vapid charade brings to mind the air-raid drills in the 1960s. A teacher writing on the blackboard suddenly about-faces and shouts "Take Cover." The students dive under their seats "face turned away from the window" just in case the glass shatters. The skeptical grade-schooler can't help but muse, "If a nuclear bomb drops on the school, flying glass is the least of my worries." DiAngelo's "interruptions" are as effective as these drills. It's hard to believe Black people are fooled and taken in by, let alone develop an "authentic cross-cultural relationship" with DiAngelo. More likely, they roll their eyes in bemusement at this "cracker" in her stupid faux dreads, while the whites walk out bitching to themselves about that "white b****." It was a political moment rich in irony during the 2020 presidential campaign when, whereas President Trump defunded "racial sensitivity training" and Joe Biden defended it, each time a session ended, the Republicans picked up and the Democrats lost a few more exasperated white votes. To be sure, a coterie of "progressive" whites revel in these rituals of self-abasement. Like Dostoyevsky's underground man, they feel "downright definite pleasure. Yes, pleasure, pleasure! … The pleasure came from being too

clearly aware of your own degradation." As it happens, this masochism pays a political dividend. The more you openly admit to your racist demons, the more you demonstrate how superior you are to those other whites in denial. German liberals are quite practiced in this *passionsspiel* as they publicly beat their breasts denouncing Nazi phantoms to show the world how beautiful they themselves are. There's another dimmed chamber in this S&M Theater of the Absurd. DiAngelo nurses a special loathing for "self-indulgent," "narcissistic" professional white women. She devotes an entire chapter to chastising these "White Women's Tears." Transparently at play is the seething *ressentiment* of someone who "grew up in poverty" and, frankly, is none too bright. She exploits her new-found power to exact revenge by calling out the "racism," real and confected, of these Karens, savoring in the spectacle of their public humiliation, browbeating them, bossing them around, putting them in their place, beneath her, getting the attention she always craved but they always got. At times she sounds like a drill sergeant. She comes off as less a "diversity trainer" than a psycho personal trainer "actively working to interrupt racism" by scheduling "sessions" with her clients, "coaching" them to "build" "racial stamina" and "endure discomfort," to "work through" their white fragility, to do the "hard, personal work," and to feel the "trauma," and instructing them when they can "take a breath," so as to develop their "advanced skill" at fighting racism. It's only a matter of time before the ever-enterprising DiAngelo (she currently charges in the 5-digits per gig) be marketin' an exercise video, she be bustin' de chops of dems Karens, as dey be sweatin' in dems *Alaia* leotards, bendin' over, shaking dems booties, raisin' dems fists in de Black Power salute, like Beyoncé at de Super Bowl. "Interrupt racism! Interrupt racism!," DiAngelo be howlin' as she be crackin' her whip, struttin' her stuff, grindin' her stilettos. Damn, she be so fine, she ain't be no wallflowa no mo'! Beads of hot sweat now be drippin'

down dems Karens' foreheads as dems minds be driftin off … off … off … to coitus interruptus wit de gardener.

The DiAngelo shtick would be comical were it not so sinister. Under the cloak of fighting racism, DiAngelo exacerbates it as she sows discord, suspicion, even hatred between Blacks and whites. She doesn't "interrupt" racism. She props it up; she buttresses it. Is it a fluke that "business leaders" (her phrase) and their media servants have embraced her? Consider these facts. The Bernie Sanders campaigns in 2016 and 2020 revealed the potential for building a radical working-class movement in the U.S. Whereas Bernie did not make major inroads among African-Americans as a whole, Blacks under 30 overwhelmingly supported him. The George Floyd protests put on vivid display the convergence of interests between Black and white young people, as they rallied en masse, as one, united, against police brutality and, behind it, against the system that has brutalized *all* their lives. No doubt, it's still a long uphill battle before a sustained mass interracial political coalition crystallizes. But what is DiAngelo's message to this nascent movement? In the guise of "interrupting" racism, she transmits to "white people" the message that they—the white working class and the white billionaire class, *all* of them together, without *any* distinction—control the power and wealth in this country. They form a homogeneous master-class. "Whites control all major institutions of society and set the policies and practices that others must live by."[188] DiAngelo presents a long list enumerating the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of white persons. For example, "Ten richest Americans: 100 percent white." Her conclusion? "They represent power and control by a racial group." In other words, Jeff Bezos and his white Amazon workers "control" as a "racial group" his $100 billion.[189] DiAngelo is the flipside of the white alt-right nationalists stoking race hatred by telling white workers that "they" are out to take away "our" privileges. Sure, she says these white

privileges constitute ill-gotten gains, but the bottom line is the same: if "they" get their way, *we* lose big time. What is DiAngelo's message to Black people? Beware! Don't trust white people! They're all racists, racists to the core! Every last one of them! They're hard-wired for racism; it's in their DNA. Behind even—nay, especially—the gentlest of smiles and protestations of solidarity, the "white collective" is filled with "glee" at "depictions of blacks as apes and gorillas." That's what the white folk marching beside you against police brutality really think of you. Your enemy is not the billionaire class. It's the white "racial group" that controls everything. For Jeff Bezos, DiAngelo's message is a godsend. It not only pits Amazon workers against each other, it also lets him personally off the hook: *Hey, I'm not the problem. Didn't you hear Robin? It's all us whites who are making life miserable for Black people. We're all guilty, we're all sinners.* DiAngelo avows that "I am eager—even excited" to fight racism. So let's take a hypothetical. Bezos hires her to conduct a "session" with the workers in an Amazon warehouse. "By the way, can you tell me what you're going to say?" "Sure, I'm going to tell your workers,

> *Although racism is real and you should always be at the ready to fight it whenever it rears its ugly head, you all, Black and white, have a helluva lot more in common. You're all, Black and white, trapped in dead-end jobs. You all earn poverty wages. You all don't have medical coverage, holiday pay, job security, a pension. You're all super-exploited by an insatiably greedy bloodsucking vampire bastard. He's forever concocting diabolical schemes to divide you. He hands whites a few more crumbs than Blacks. He elevates whites a half notch higher on the totem pole. But at the end of the day, you're all his slaves. If you want a better life for yourselves and your children, you've got to be decent and fair to each other. If there's a racial incident, you don't need idiotic "diversity trainers" like me to set things straight. I'm just put here to stir up trouble and sow hate between you. Figure out among yourselves how to settle it, you're smart enough. Take the hotheads to the wise heads. Remember, even Nelson Mandela's white jailers came to respect him. Mutual respect is possible, and you all have too much to lose if you let racism drag you down. And then organize together, as one because you* ***are*** *one, to overthrow this wretched, corrupt, god-forsaken system. You can't eliminate every fleeting, non-p.c. thought passing through your head. The mind is a tricky business. A famous philosopher was once asked whether he analyzed his dreams. "Analyze my dreams?" he responded in shock, "I have trouble enough making sense of my waking hours!" There's the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious,*

the rational and the irrational, and a myriad of other posited and uncharted compartments as well as byways and highways linking them. "I am sorry to have to say," Martin Luther King rued, "that the vast majority of white Americans are racist, either consciously or unconsciously." You can't wait until everyone's thoughts are simon-pure. You don't have the time, and they never will be. You cannot police your thoughts, and it's probably better that way. Were it otherwise, you wouldn't be human. You're fallible, you're imperfect vessels. You weren't born, and your minds can't be, immaculate. You shouldn't acquiesce in your inner demons, but you shouldn't become neurotic about them or let them paralyze you either. Good deeds get the last word: they speak doubly louder than words, and trebly louder than a stray thought. If, however, you set your minds to building solidarity based on your common interests, you can eliminate, if not noxious thoughts, then—what's a thousand times more important!—a noxious ***system*** *that robs you of a fair chance at life's happiness. You need to act now, or it's never. Your country stands on the precipice, your planet is dying. Your impure thoughts can wait. You need to keep your eyes on the prize. The C.E.O. wants to fool you into believing it's your psyches that need changing. But it's the system that needs changing. If you unite to change the system, then your psyches will fall into place. It's common struggle, common sacrifice, that produces mutual respect, even mutual love. A connection that binds will be forged by you, united in the heat of battle facing a common enemy, each marching beside the other, each lifting the other, each protecting the other. You don't become better persons by each of you, singly, struggling with your racist demons. You become better persons by all of you, together, struggling against an antihuman system. Fuck the session! Fight the system! Unite! Unite! Unite! To save yourselves, and your planet! You have nothing to lose but your chains! You have a world to win!*

As "eager—even excited" as DiAngelo is to "interrupt" racism, it's most unlikely that she would deliver this message. She might be dumb, but not that dumb. She knows exactly what Bezos would say: "Robin, you're interrupted!"

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Chapter 5

Ibram X. Kendi's Woke Guide to Who's Hot and Who's Not

Ibram X. Kendi first emerged as a public personality in 2016 after his chronicle, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America,* won a National Book Award.[190] In 2019, he published *How to Be an Antiracist*,[191] a distillation of his "definitive history" interspersed with his sophomoric, soporific odyssey from racist to antiracist. It cannot be said that one actually learns anything from these tracts. He presents neither interpretative framework nor overarching thesis nor historical context. Instead, he's assembled *The Woke Guide to Who's Hot (Antiracists) and Who's Not (Racists).* Although *Stamped* comes equipped with a robust scholarly apparatus,[192] its only novelty is to shoehorn the epithets *racist* or *antiracist*, *segregationist* or *assimilationist* into every other sentence. He has written less a definitive history than an exhaustive, and exhausting, *taxonomy* that's as supple as a calcified femur and as subtle as an oversized mallet. It proceeds from the fatuous, almost juvenile, conceit that fastening binary, wooden labels on the actors and ideas incident to Black history will shed light on it. His companion volume, *How to Be an Antiracist*, is a jumble of politically correct bromides leavened with "Afrocentric" mysticisms, none of which, if juxtaposed beside each other, cohere and most of which, if taken literally, are bizarre. On close inspection, his manual proves to be more fashion statement than political manifesto. The singular value of his books is that they comprehensively collect the rhetorical posings and posturings of woke culture. If, after parsing Kendi's oeuvre, it's revealed to be bankrupt,

the reader can safely leave behind this genre of fanzine history and move on to greener conceptual pastures.[193]

If the sheer multitude of characters assembled by Kendi rivals a Cecil B. DeMille extravaganza, still, it gives pause the roles in which he casts them, as well as his selection of whom to include and exclude, and who should get top billing or just a cameo. To begin with, he reckons most of the revered figures in the African-American "freedom struggle" to be, albeit in calibrated degrees, racists of one stripe or another: Frederick Douglass and fellow Black Abolitionists David Walker and Sojourner Truth (as well as white Abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Beecher Stowe), W. E. B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., poet Phillis Wheatley, novelist Richard Wright, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark, historian John Hope Franklin.... It jars the historical sensibility that Douglass comes off as just shy of a dyed-in-the-wool racist, while Garrison—whom Douglass eulogized as among "the ablest and most eloquent voices ever raised in behalf of the black man's cause"—and Stowe—whom Douglass memorialized for her "splendid genius" and "exalted sense of justice"—fare scarcely better. Each of the entries on Kendi's roster of "racists" was, to be sure, flawed, a product of the historical moment and fallible personal judgment. It is not in dispute his observation that "we can be a racist one minute and an antiracist the next," "antiracist one moment, racist in many more moments." Thus, the aspersions Douglass casually cast on Native Americans can't and shouldn't be defended, and, for that matter, it's not open to question that Douglass, alongside Du Bois, Robeson, and King, acted most dishonorably by their respective spouses. (On the other hand, in public life Douglass and Du Bois adhered to an egalitarian ethic between the sexes, while Robeson chose as his lifelong accompanist the freely gay Lawrence Brown.) But whereas a rounded, true-to-life portrait must include, to borrow the hackneyed phrase, warts and all;

still, by his promiscuous flinging of the *racist* epithet at historical figures who, if not plaster saints to be supplicated, nonetheless *earned*, by some alloy of brilliance, principle, industry, and sacrifice, a place of worldly honor that has withstood the passage of time, Kendi's artless, not to say tasteless, name-calling—Wheatley "marvel[s] in her assimilation," Douglass is "America's newest Black exhibit," Wright "drown[s] in all of his cultural racism"—adds nil and subtracts a lot. It's writing history with the bluntest of instruments, wielding an axe where a pair of forceps is needed; peering at history reflected ahistorically in a funhouse mirror. Thus deployed, the moral content of the epithet *racist* is so diluted by indiscriminate use, that to be a racist ceases to be what it ought to be: a scarlet badge of shame. Saturating as it does Kendi's pages, the epithet discounts to a wart,[194] while its utility value discounts to zero: what information is conveyed by a label that collapses the distinction between Frederick Douglass and the Grand Wizard of the K.K.K.?[195]

If Kendi's racist rogues' gallery weren't disorientating enough, his pantheon of pure-blood antiracist superstars also raises eyebrows. True, it includes such eminent worthies as polymath Benjamin Banneker, Abolitionist Martin Delany, authors Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin, and, of course, Malcolm X and Angela Davis. But then, all of a sudden, he rises to the defense of Stepin Fetchit as well as the cast of *Amos 'n' Andy* who, notoriously, trucked in demeaning racial stereotypes, and of Carl Van Vechten's titillating send-up of Harlem, *Nigger Heaven*.[196] President Harry S. Truman earns Kendi's plaudits for desegregating the armed forces and federal workplace. But didn't Truman also drop two atomic bombs on an Asian country, and preside over the anticommunist witch hunt that vilified, among others, Du Bois and Robeson? "[Du Bois'] reputation would lie in ruins and his freedom to work and walk among his compatriots would hang in the balance of cold war justice" during the Truman presidency,

biographer David Levering Lewis recalled. "He would be but one victim among the many accused, censured, and convicted, yet the humiliation to be visited upon him, as with his friend Paul Robeson, was meant as an express warning to his people and their leaders—a message that their long struggle for equality must continue to exemplify commendable patience, conventional patriotism, and immunity to radical economic ideas." While Kendi elevates Truman into his antiracist pantheon, Du Bois was of a rather different mind: "He ranks with Adolf Hitler as one of the greatest killers of our day." Then, improbably, Kendi mocks "civil rights activists … fixated on the 'N-word,'" and embraces on the very same page both Jeremiah Wright's notorious "God Damn America" sermon as well as the "perceptive and brilliant" Michelle Obama. But didn't Michelle rhapsodize at the 2016 Democratic Party convention that "this is the greatest country on Earth"?[197] So, which is it, God Damn America or God Bless America? The point is, Kendi hurls his labels with total abandon. It's impossible to discern rule or reason in his assignment of them. What he's written is not history informed by a thesis or a coherent vision. It's caprice, as arbitrary as it is eccentric. It is *The World According to Kendi*. Indeed, it crosses the threshold into sheer nuttiness. A colonial America Quaker is rebuked for his "political racism" on one page and commended on the next for avowing that "no one is inferior in God's eyes." A labor militant is reproached for his colorblind exhortation, "one dividing line—that which separates mankind into two great classes," and also the National Labor Union to which he belonged for asseverating that it "knew neither color nor sex on the question of the rights of labor." Repudiating racism is thus construed as proof positive of it.[198] If his one and only innovation is to affix the *racist/antiracist* tag on each of the characters in his history, and if the rigor of his taxonomy recalls not the Periodic Table but, on

the contrary, Pin the Tail on the Donkey, it's hard to figure just what one can glean from reading Kendi's books.

But it's not just Kendi's scorecard of antiracist saints and racist sinners that consternates. It's also his sense of historical proportion. He tosses off a couple of bland sentences on Robeson, whereas he gives over a full page of breathless prose to Black Panther "Minister of Information" Eldridge Cleaver: "a giant of a man and thinker and writer … uniquely antiracist in his regal attraction to Black women."[199] Robeson sacrificed his extraordinary professional career on the altar of personal and political principle. "I will not retreat one thousandth part of one inch," he retorted to his persecutors. Not backing down, his career in tatters, Robeson suffered a mental breakdown and ended up in self-imposed, if still unrepentant, seclusion. On the other hand, once the Panther moment passed, Cleaver became a far-right Republican and plunged into fashion design as—here I'll quote *Wikipedia*'s discreet entry—

> he released codpiece-revival "virility pants" he called "the Cleavers," enthusing that they would give men "a chance to assert their masculinity."

In other words, a humongous faux-dick hung from *the Cleavers*' zipper. Truly regal, wouldn't you say? Iconic figures in the Civil Rights Movement such as Ella Baker, Bob Moses, and Diane Nash rate in Kendi's "definitive history" nary a single word. But "biggest, boldest, baddest, and Blackest" actress Pam Grier gets star billing as she sported "the era's most popular Afro"; Hollywood sex symbol Bo Derek also gets a leading role as she "wore her hair in cornrows with beads"; while "superstar rapper" Kanye West bags an honorary platinum as "no one summoned up the raw feelings of antiracist Blacks better." West also "loved this guy" Donald Trump and proclaimed that, if slavery endured for 400 years, it must have been the slaves' "choice"—but, hey, he's a superstar, so who cares?[200]

Still, Kendi's oddball labels and space apportionments are only the half of it. He mangles the historical record and, when plumbing the facts for deeper meaning, goes off the deep end. Consider his legal exposition:

- He states that the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision "avowed the segregationist lie that the 'Negro and white schools involved have been equalized, or are being equalized'"; "agreed with the lower court's finding that southern schools had 'been equalized, or are being equalized.'"[201] But the Court said no such thing. Rather, it stated that in the "instant cases" before the Court, educational facilities of whites and Blacks, respectively, had been or were in the process of being equalized. It consolidated these *specific* cases as they posed in stark terms the question: *If "tangibles" (e.g., school infrastructure, teacher salaries, bus transportation) were equalized between white and Black schools, would segregation still be injurious due to its "intangible" (e.g., psychological) effects?*[202] In other words, the dilemma that the Court set out to resolve was whether, in pursuit of that equality enshrined in the Constitution, racially segregated facilities should be made materially equal or they perforce must be racially integrated. By considering lower-court cases in which tangibles had been equalized, the Court could isolate and thus squarely face the issue of intangible inequality.[203] The Court did not make the patently absurd claim, ascribed to it by Kendi, that "Southern schools" as a whole provided materially equal facilities or were equalizing them for Blacks and whites; it was a commonplace that Black schools in the South were overall grossly substandard. In his classic 1944 study, *An American Dilemma* (which the Court cited in *Brown*), Gunnar Myrdal observed that "racial discrimination in the appointment of

school facilities in the South is as spectacular as it is well known."[204]

- He states per *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*—a landmark 1978 Supreme Court opinion upholding the constitutionality of affirmative action—that University of California at Davis medical school had turned away white applicant Allan Bakke "citing his 'present age' and lukewarm interview scores as the main factors in the rejection." In a sneering aside, he rebukes Bakke for his "refusal to look in the mirror of his age and interviewing prowess."[205] But the claim that Bakke was rejected by U.C. Davis on account of his age is baseless, while the reference to Bakke's interview performance is a malicious half-truth. Bakke applied twice to U.C. Davis. When he was first rejected in 1973 (his application was submitted late in a "rolling" admissions process), he complained to the chair of the admissions committee about the affirmative action program. This same chair interviewed Bakke when he applied again the next year and manifestly penalized him for objecting to Davis' minority set-aside. Except for this chair's vindictive evaluation, Bakke's credentials were stellar.[206]
- He states initially that the 1964 Civil Rights Act legitimized "racism" as it "allowed employers 'to give and act upon the results of any professionally developed ability test,'" and only barred assessment protocols the explicit "intent" of which were discriminatory. But then he quotes the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Griggs* (1971), upholding the 1964 Act that "proscribes not only overt discrimination, but also practices that are fair in form, but discriminatory in operation." So what is Kendi's beef? According to him, "the Supreme Court … gave employers a loophole…. 'The touchstone is business necessity. If an employment practice which operates to exclude Negroes cannot

> be shown to be related to job performance, the practice is prohibited.' Racist employers could then simply ensure that their discriminatory hiring and promotion practices were related to job performance, and therefore to business necessity" (the internal quote is from the Court opinion). Unpacking all this, one finds that, *contra* Kendi, the 1964 Civil Rights Act as interpreted by the Supreme Court prohibited not just intentional but also de facto discrimination. True, the Court additionally upheld the prerogative of an employer to administer protocols manifestly designed to assess an applicant's qualifications. Exactly why this is inherently racist puzzles. Is it racist to demand of a prospective French translator that she first translate a passage from *Le Petit Prince* or a prospective N.B.A. player that he first dribble downcourt a basketball?[207]

It would appear that Kendi has won the trifecta: he managed to butcher all three legal holdings.

When Kendi ventures to elaborate on the findings of other scholars, matters go even further askew. Consider his handling of an incident during the Civil War that is chronicled in Eric Foner's *The Fiery Trial*:

Foner	Kendi
[A]t the urging of Secretary of War Stanton, who had traveled to Savannah, Sherman met with twenty leaders of the local black community, most of them Baptist and Methodist ministers. The conversation revealed that the black leaders possessed clear conceptions of slavery and freedom. Asked what he understood by slavery, Garrison Frazier, the group's spokesman, replied that it meant "receiving by irresistible power the work of another man, and not by his	Secretary of War Edwin McMasters Stanton arrived in Savannah after the New Year and urged General Sherman to meet with local Blacks over their future. Meeting with twenty leaders, mostly Baptist and Methodist ministers…, General Sherman received a crash course on their definitions of slavery and freedom. Slavery meant "receiving by irresistible power the work of another man, and not by his consent," said the group's spokesman, Garrison Frazier…. To accomplish this—*to be truly free*—we must "have land." When asked whether they

consent." Freedom he defined as "placing us where we could reap the fruit of our own labor," a definition not unlike Lincoln's. The best way to accomplish this was "to have land and till it by our own labor."	desired interracial communities, Frazier shared their preference "to live by ourselves." There was "a prejudice against us in the South that will take years to get over." **Black people all over the South were saying this to Union officials: Do not abolish slavery and leave us landless. Do not force us to work for our former masters and call that freedom. They distinguished between *abolishing slavery* and *freeing people.* You can only set us free by providing us with land to "till … by our own labor," they declared. In offering postwar policy, Black people were rewriting what it meant to be free. *And,* in antiracist fashion, they were rejecting integration as a race relations strategy that involved Blacks showing Whites their equal humanity. They were rejecting uplift suasion—rejecting the job of working to undo the racist ideas of Whites by not performing stereotypes. Racist ideas, they were saying, were only in the eyes of the beholder, and only the beholders of racist ideas were responsible for their release.**[208]

Kendi's most notable contribution (in boldface) is to tack on a mélange of wild generalization and woeful gibberish. Or consider his garnishment of Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow*. Alexander insightfully observed that, although the number of drug-related deaths paled beside alcohol-related deaths even during the height of the crack epidemic, our society has been far more humane in its treatment of drunk drivers. Was it sheer coincidence that drug offenses predominantly implicated Black males, whereas alcohol offenses predominantly implicated white males? Kendi appropriates this cogent point, but then transmogrifies it into a vast conspiracy perpetrated by allegedly racist statisticians:

Alexander	Kendi

The vastly different sentences afforded drunk drivers and drug offenders speaks volumes regarding who is viewed as disposable—someone to be purged from the body politic—and who is not. Drunk drivers are predominantly white and male. White men comprised 78 percent of the arrests for this offense in 1990 when new mandatory minimums governing drunk driving were being adopted. They are generally charged with misdemeanors and typically receive sentences involving fines, license suspension, and community service. Although drunk driving carries a far greater risk of violent death than the use or sale of illegal drugs, the societal response to drunk drivers has generally emphasized keeping the person functional and in society, while attempting to respond to the dangerous behavior through treatment and counseling. People charged with drug offenses, though, are disproportionately poor people of color. They are typically charged with felonies and sentenced to prison.	Even the statistics suggesting that more violent crime—especially on innocent victims—was occurring in urban Black neighborhoods were based on a racist statistical method rather than reality. Drunk drivers, who routinely kill more people than violent urban Blacks, were not regarded as violent criminals in such [statistical] studies, and 78 percent of arrested drunk drivers were White males in 1990. ... More people every year die violently from drunk drivers than they do from homicides…. One study found that 75 percent of drunk drivers are White men. But when people think of violent crime, they don't even think of drunk drivers. That's not even in their conceptual radar. But if we were to integrate drunk-driving and drunk drivers into our conceptual radar, it would expand our notion of what is a dangerous neighborhood. And those communities that have more people who are drinking and driving and killing people would be considered more dangerous. But because drunk drivers are typically White men, and because our racist ideas compel us to say White men are not dangerous but Black men are and Black women are, people can't even conceive of a White neighborhood with White people being dangerous, even though year after year more people die in those neighborhoods from drunk driving than people in Black neighborhoods from homicides.[209]

If it appears that Blacks disproportionately perpetrate violent crime, that's because racist bookkeepers exclude D.U.I. deaths, perpetrated mostly by whites, in violent crime statistics. But it's also almost certain

that more people die on operating tables at the hands of negligent white surgeons than Black surgeons, in airline accidents caused by negligent white pilots than Black pilots, on golf courses by negligent white players than Black players teeing-off. Is it then racist to exclude these fatalities in violent crime statistics, or are violent crime statistics disaggregated from these other breakdowns as they quite obviously respond to a discrete social concern? The typical prospective homeowner or business proprietor, white *and Black*, is—I should think, understandably—charier of the incidence of violent homicides in a neighborhood than drunk-driving deaths. Is it really racist to inquire as to the frequency of drug shootouts as against D.U.I. hit-and-run accidents? Kendi's other creative appropriations fall as flat. He reinvents Du Bois' "double consciousness" as his own "dueling consciousness."[210] But whereas Du Bois' notion has spawned a rich corpus of theoretical reflection,[211] Kendi's dueling consciousness "between antiracist and assimilationist ideas"[212] in American history might just as well denote dueling popsicle sticks; he reduces the larger-than-life characters of a story that has been told with enviable grace, complexity and subtlety by so many gifted and dedicated historians to caricatured, flattened, and rigidified stick figures befitting a comic strip. In another stab at originality, Kendi posits that the term *Enlightenment* is racist as its etymological root is light, which both betokens reason (enlightened) and is verbally next of kin to white, versus its antonym dark, which both betokens unreason (Dark Ages) and is verbally next of kin to Black. Was Plato's allegory of the cave (darkness and ignorance) and the sun (lightness and wisdom), then, coded racism—or might it simply be that it's rather more difficult to discern things in pitch darkness than broad daylight? In a second linguistic foray, Kendi deduces that the term *minority* is laced with racist infantilizing as "racists had construed Black folk as minors to White majors, and that history could be easily loaded into their latest identifier of the

supposed lesser peoples: minorities." In other words, to designate a group a "minority" implicitly denigrates it as child-like. So, when Martin Luther King, Jr. said that "almost always the creative, dedicated minority has made the world better," was he casting a racist aspersion upon himself and his confederates? To paraphrase Freud, sometimes a word is just a word; a linguistic plot against Black people does not lurk behind every lexicological entry. The salient question posed by Kendi's "definitive history," then, is what's worse: when he mangles the facts or meditates on them?[213]

* * *

What is race?

Since they were first kidnapped onto these shores, according to Kendi, African-Americans haven't registered any progress in the struggle against racism. Each seeming stride forward has been attended by a step backward. For each and every antiracist action, there has been an equal and opposite racist reaction. It's a history the proper metaphor for which is not an upward slope but, on the contrary, a swinging pendulum:

> The actual American history [is] of racial progress and the simultaneous progression of racism.[214]

If John Hope Franklin titled his classic history of the African-American experience *From Slavery to Freedom*, Kendi's history could be titled *From Slavery to … Slavery*. Of the legislation enacted during the Civil Rights Movement, he writes,

> These laws did not spell the doom of racist policies. The racist policies simply evolved.[215]

The accumulation of historical defeats has resulted not just in political stagnation but, even worse, a deterioration in the plight of Black

people: "generation after generation repeats the same failed strategies and solutions and ideologies," while each new defeat "multiplies" those preceding it.[216] In other words, Kendi makes the audacious claim that *even after the Civil War and after the Civil Rights Movement, Black people are worse off today than when they were stamped at the beginning.* It is his central conceit that this regression ultimately traces back to a definitional failure: "If we don't do the basic work of defining the kind of people we want to be in language that is stable and consistent, we can't work toward stable, consistent goals."[217] If racism and antiracism can be properly demarcated, if the boundaries separating them can be clearly delineated, then everything else will, supposedly, start falling into place. In order to lead Black people out of their centuries-long meanderings in the desert, Kendi sets his resolve to fill in this conceptual void. His objective, which he pursues with classificatory zeal, is to pin the proper label—*racist* or *antiracist*—not just on each individual person but also on each individual thought passing through the head of each individual.[218] No allowance is made for the possibility of a middle ground, of a disagreement in good faith, of an honest difference in judgment. It's Harlan County in the famous union song,[219] you're in either one camp or the other: "there are no neutrals here."

Still, in what purports to be a primer on antiracism, one in which refinement of terminology is his avowed goal, Kendi has almost nothing to say about current scientific debates surrounding the root concept of *race*.[220] In his most lucid moments, he merely repeats the woke dogma that race is a "social construction" or a "mirage." In less lucid moments, when he lapses (as he all too often does) into mumbo-jumbo, Kendi ruminates that "race is fundamentally a power construct of blended difference that lives socially."[221] So far as a layperson (such as this writer) can judge, the current scientific consensus indeed holds that, whereas DNA sequences differ subtly between human clusters

that spring from different continents, the effects of these subtle differences on behavior remain highly speculative. For all practical purposes, then, it is still scientifically rigorous to speak of a single human race. In another commonplace, Kendi construes race to be an ideological weapon of the "haves" designed to rationalize otherwise indefensible human exploitation:

> The history of racist ideas is the history of powerful policymakers erecting racist policies out of self-interest, then producing racist ideas to defend and rationalize the inequitable effects of their policies, while everyday people consume those racist ideas, which in turn sparks ignorance and hate;
>
> Racist ideas … dress up the ugly economic and political exploitation of African people.[222]

According to him, a super-exploitive white elite benefits from these ill-gotten gains, albeit "ordinary White people" do pocket some crumbs as well.[223] But if most notable Black thinkers have been anti-Black racists, it perplexes why did *they* espouse racist ideas? It couldn't be naïveté: many of them sprang from the intellectual avant-garde and the political left. Karl Marx lauded Aristotle as "the great investigator who was the first to analyze the value-form, like so many other forms of thought, society, and nature." Still, according to Marx, Aristotle was unable to discern that, in the exchange of commodities (e.g., five beds=one house), "all labor is expressed as equal human labor and therefore as labor of equal quality." Why was Aristotle blind to this? "Because Greek society was founded on the labor of slaves, hence had as its natural basis the inequality of men and of their labor-powers. The secret of the expression of value, namely the equality and equivalence of all kinds of labor because and in so far as they are human labor in general, could not be deciphered until the concept of human equality in general had already acquired the permanence of a fixed popular opinion." The point here is not whether Marx's analysis was right or wrong but, rather, that if a first-rank mind like Aristotle's

falters badly on a critical point, it behooves the historian to account for this anomaly. Kendi, however, doesn't even notice let alone posit an explanation for the paradox that, according to him, almost every exemplary figure in the African-American "freedom struggle" propounded more often than not racist ideas. It didn't trace back to "self-interest," as none of them have stood to profit from embracing their degradation.[224] Even granting (if only for argument's sake) Kendi's surpassing genius, and even granting (per Kendi) the benightedness of ordinary Black folk,[225] could the best and brightest among Black Americans, the most perspicacious and accomplished among them, have been so gullible, ingenuous or deluded as not to see their own flagrant racism—or has Kendi's "basic work of defining" race yielded absurd results?

Although Kendi conceives of race as a social construction contrived to rationalize super-exploitation, he would "still identify as Black":

> Our societies, our policies, our ideas, our histories, and our cultures have rendered race and made it matter.... I see myself culturally and historically and politically in Blackness.... The gift of seeing myself as Black instead of being color-blind is that it allows me to clearly see myself ... as being an antiracist, as a member of the interracial body striving to accept and equate and empower racial difference of all kinds.[226]

It's undoubtedly true that, once you're stamped as a member of a despised group, there's no escaping this fate,[227] while there's something palpably demeaning about trying to escape it, as if shame justly attaches to such belonging. (Even if successfully "passing," you still carry inside the cowardice of your deception and still live in perpetual dread of being exposed.) It's no less true that, even as a stigmatized group is defined by an external power,[228] it also simultaneously creates itself "culturally and historically and politically," and more often than not can lay claim to redemptive acts of individual and collective attainment in which it can rightly take pride. Still, it's hard to figure why Kendi would—in the name, of all things, of *anti*racism—be

"striving to accept and equate and *empower* racial difference," not as a temporary, defensive measure, but as a desideratum, i.e., for the sake of racial difference. If, according to him, the invention of a "Black race" has imprisoned African-Americans in an exploitive social construct, shouldn't he be aspiring to its eradication? Many a person unjustly thrown behind bars experiences, amidst all the ills and pathologies of prison life, sublime acts of collective solidarity, even, like Malcolm X, personal epiphany. Charlie Chaplin's tramp memorably preferred the comfort and security of jail to the vicissitudes of grinding poverty. But even so, shouldn't Kendi be "striving" not to fortify the prison walls but, on the contrary, to enable a life of dignified freedom outside them? Only a race hustler pimping off "racial difference" would, it appears, actively seek to "empower" it. To be sure, Kendi also avows the exact opposite: "To be antiracist is to focus on ending the racism that shapes the mirages."[229] Like most race hustlers, his strong suit isn't consistency.

What is racism/antiracism?

In another Brotherhood Week platitude, Kendi defines racism or a racist idea as the belief in "a racial hierarchy," "any concept that regards one racial group as inferior or superior to another racial group in any way."[230] He goes on to elucidate that "racist ideas … explain racial inequities" by positing "the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups," while a racist is "someone who is supporting a racist policy."[231] The term "racial disparities" (also "racial inequities") denotes the under- or over-representation of a racial group in a sector of society:

> By racial disparities, I mean how racial groups are not statistically represented according to their populations.[232]

But if tracing back a statistical disparity to the putative *genetic inferiority/superiority* of a racial group is, absent compelling proof, racist,[233] still, membership in a race[234] in and of itself—not racism—might account for certain socioeconomic saliences: if proportionally more Asians own restaurants specializing in Asian cuisine, race is surely a factor while racism might not be. What is a "racist policy"? The term would clearly apply to a policy that artificially buttresses a racial inequity by privileging a putatively superior group—say, reserving a disproportionately high number of seats at Harvard for WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) applicants. But would a recruitment policy the competitive result of which is disproportional representation of a particular group—say, overrepresentation of African-Americans in the N.B.A. or Asian-Americans at M.I.T.—necessarily be racist? Whereas Kendi emphatically and repeatedly says yes,[235] reason and common sense say no. Culture, class: they can also be factors. Racial disparities are not always and only about racism. If the overrepresentation of Blacks and Asians, respectively, must be the result of white racism; and if white racism rationalizes white super-exploitation; then, the more that the recruitment policy of white N.B.A. owners results in Black overrepresentation, and the recruitment policy of white M.I.T. administrators results in Asian overrepresentation, the more racist these whites must be and the more super-exploited Blacks and Asians must be.[236] Or has Kendi's "basic work of defining" racism yielded another absurd result?[237]

In a complementary tautological inanity, Kendi defines an *antiracist* as

> one who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.

If that's not clarifying enough, he throws in these platitudes-cum-bromides:

> An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group;
>
> To be antiracist is to equate and nurture difference among racial groups;
>
> An antiracist treats and remembers individuals as individuals.[238]

But if racial groups are a "mirage," is he then saying that all hallucinations are equal; and if racial groups are real, then why should an antiracist see individuals only as individuals and not also as members of discrete racial groups; and if racial groups are mirages, why would and how could they be "nurtured;" and if racial groups are something palpable, how can they be simply equated without further argument, as in 1=1, if *something* must distinguish them? It gets curiouser and curiouser. In an autobiographical passage, Kendi rhapsodizes over the "irrepressible Blackness" of his friend Yaba.[239] But isn't he then seeing her not only as an individual but also as a member of a racial group? What's more, if the Black racial group is a mirage, then it follows that he must be lavishing praise on her irrepressible nothingness; while if he's lavishing praise on her actual Blackness, isn't he then putting a premium on this aspect of her being, and mightn't the claimant to this extraordinary quality be most *un*equal to the possessor of, say, mere "irrepressible whiteness"—which in turn would make Blackness as against whiteness rather more than just "*apparent* differences"?

An "antiracist policy" is one that "produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups," and one in which "equal opportunities *and thus outcomes* exist between the equal groups"[240] (emphasis added). Not to beat a dead horse, but would antiracist Kendi—who supports robust affirmative action to rectify racial disparity[241]—then institute a "racial equity" quota for whites and Asians in the N.B.A.?[242] A leitmotif (or bugbear) of his corpus is the eradication of racial disparity. To read him, one might suppose that, not Marx's class struggle but, instead, racial disparity was the motor force of history:

> The principal function of racist ideas in American history has been the suppression of resistance to … racial disparities;
>
> [It is a] moral duty … to eliminate the evil of racial disparities.[243]

Yet, for all Kendi's flamboyant militance, it can't but be noticed how exiguous his actual policy agenda is. Marx famously posited that as the inner logic of the capitalist system played itself out, "it makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole." That depiction might be said to approximate our country today. What is Kendi's antiracist vision in the face of this human catastrophe? "Equity" of "outcomes" between "racial groups." Put otherwise, that *13 percent of the one percent at one pole should be Black, and let the other Black people rot alongside their fellow white disposables at the other pole.* Reflecting later in life on his pre-radical youth, when he accepted the status quo except wanting to repair its racial inequities, Du Bois rued:

> I was not questioning the world movement in itself. What the white world was doing, its goals and ideals, I had not doubted were quite right. What was wrong was that I and people like me and thousands of others who have my ability and aspiration, were refused permission to be a part of this world. It was as though moving on a rushing express, my main thought was as to my relations with the other passengers on the express, and not to its rate of speed and its destination.[244]

That's the essence of Kendi's worldview: the system—its means and its ends—would be fine if only a fair share of Blacks prospered from it, even as 99 percent were consigned to misery. But his impoverished antiracist vision is just the half of it. He also lacks a plausible policy prescription to implement his agenda. It might be supposed, for example, that, if Kendi had his way, the most qualified applicants in each racial group would gain admission to medical school. But what

determines "most qualified"? He rails against standardized tests as they yield "a disparity in academic performance" between racial groups that, at least in part, traces back to the racism embedded in the tests' design.[245] If the G.P.A.s of Blacks in the natural sciences also fall short of white performance, that's because this criterion, too, is—indeed, if its distribution produces a racial disparity, *must be*—racist. Still, why not then admit the top performers according to standard admissions criteria *within* each respective racial group?[246] He posits, however, not just inter-group but also intra-group racism, such as "colorism"—i.e., "racist policies that lead to inequities between Light people and Dark people."[247] Thus, an intra-group ranking based on standard academic criteria that wasn't proportional to "Light and Dark people" would also be tainted; per definition, such a "disparity in academic performance" between different shades of Black applicants must be racist, and the first tier in each racial group must have benefited from racism. But then, what admissions criterion can pass muster with Kendi? He proposes at one point that intellect be measured by "an individual's desire to know." It's not altogether obvious that an aspiring brain surgeon with a strong "desire to know" would be the best candidate for medical school.[248] Absent the "desire to know" criterion, medical school admissions could only be based on an arbitrary selection within each racial applicant pool. In other words, each seat in medical school would be randomly filled on the basis of membership in a "race"—which is itself a "mirage." May God help the hospital patients in Kendi's racial-parity utopia. Alas, there's more. Borrowing a page from Kimberlé Crenshaw's "intersectional" playbook, he posits a potentially infinite regression of *discrete, irreducible* racisms within each racial group: colorism (against darker-skinned Blacks), class racism (against poor Blacks), space racism (against inner-city Blacks), gender racism (against LGBTQI Blacks), and on and on.[249] Were "outcomes" among medical school applicants

equalized so as to obtain parity representation *between* racial groups as well as between discrete subgroups *within* each racial group (Black, Hispanic, Asian…, poor Black, poor Hispanic, poor Asian…, gay Black, gay Hispanic, gay Asian…, lesbian Black, lesbian Hispanic, lesbian Asian..., poor gay Black, poor gay Hispanic, poor gay Asian…), then, each medical school entering class would, for want of space, have to convene in Madison Square Garden.

Finally, Kendi homes in on the distinction between "not racist" and "antiracist":

> "Not racist" … is a claim that signifies neutrality: "I am not a racist, but neither am I aggressively against racism."… The claim of "not racist" neutrality is a mask for racism.[250]

But who, pray tell, describes themselves as "not racist" in the sense of "neutrality"? On the contrary, such a disavowal tacitly signals one's opposition to racism, as in, *I am not racist, I oppose racism.* Moreover, it takes precious little courage to describe oneself nowadays as an antiracist. It's not as if antiracists are being rounded up and shipped off to concentration camps. To wrap oneself in the *antiracist* mantle thus amounts to radical preening until and unless one has *earned* it. When a leader of the anti-Nazi underground is asked what he does for a living, the protagonist in *Watch on the Rhine* replies, "I fight against fascism!" If it's a stirring moment in the film, that's because he's literally staked his life for a righteous cause. A little humility might be in order before anointing oneself an antiracist. Unlike *poseurs*, veteran militants understand this. That's not all, however. Right after he harps on the urgency of being an *anti*racist, Kendi goes on to defend his profligate use of the epithet *racist.* He professes that to be a racist isn't such a bad thing:

> "Racist" is not … a pejorative. It is not the worst word in the English language; it is not the equivalent of a slur. It is descriptive, and the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it.[251]

But wouldn't it be most strange if one were called a "racist" and didn't feel demeaned or, at any rate, insulted? How can the purveyor of an ideology that legitimizes whippings and lynchings, slavery and genocide, not but be the object of public obloquy? Indeed, if racist is a neutral descriptive, devoid of normative value, then it perplexes why Kendi is so hung up on being an *anti*racist. Why would he so fervently wish to "undo" and "dismantle" racism? If it's just a more or less benign epithet, just another innocuous taste or preference, then shouldn't he be tolerant of it, not dead-set on eradicating it? Shouldn't he just be *not racist*, as in, "I'm a Yankees fan, I'm not anti Mets, I'm just a not-Mets fan"? But if, on the contrary, it's imperative to be intolerant of racism, it's precisely because it *isn't* just another harmless preference. "I refuse to characterize as opinion," Sartre peremptorily declared, "a doctrine that is aimed directly at particular persons and that seeks to suppress their rights or to exterminate them."[252] It further perplexes why Kendi would want to morally neuter the scourge of racism. It's not as if society had to render value-free the scourges of *murder* and *rape* in order to successfully prosecute them. A moment's reflection would suggest otherwise: to purge itself of an unmitigated evil, the whole of society's *moral* weight must be pressed in service against it.

What is an assimilationist?

The category *racist* is subdivided into *segregationist* and *assimilationist*. They constitute two sides of the same racist coin:

> Assimilationist ideas and segregationist ideas are the two types of racist ideas.[253]

Kendi's definition of *segregationist* more or less conforms to conventional usage of the term racist, albeit phrased in predictably clunky prose: "One who is expressing the racist idea that a permanently inferior racial group can never be developed and is

supporting policy that segregates away that racial group."[254] If he restricted the term racist to segregationists, then his "theorizing" would probably have passed without notice. It's *first*, his casual flinging of the epithet assimilationist; *second*, his premise that every assimilationist is *eo ipso* a racist; and *third*, his belief that assimilationists pose the greater danger as they deceptively package their racism—it's these eccentricities that, combined and compounded, yield a bizarro "history of racist ideas in America."[255] An *assimilationist* is formally defined as

> one who is expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group.[256]

Concretely, this definition incorporates two distinct meanings. An assimilationist either denies that Black people form a discrete racial demographic, or affirms that Black people carry scars of racial oppression.

Black people constitute a discrete racial demographic

The assimilationist denies that Black people constitute a discrete racial group, whereas the antiracist embraces the "concept of racial relativity, of every racial group looking at itself with its own eyes."[257] The racial inheritance of African-Americans traces back to their continent of origin. These vestiges of Mother Africa might not be visible to the naked eye, but they are all the same deposited in the finer essence of Black people. An ebony epidermis is a lot more than skin deep. It is the manifest of profound racial differentiation:

> It is difficult to find the survival and revival of African cultural forms using our surface-sighted cultural eyes. Those surface-sighted eyes assess a cultural body by its skin. They do not look behind, inside, below.… Surface-sighted people have no sense of … "the deep structure of culture," the philosophies and values that change outward physical forms.

In a word, Kendi *reverses* Martin Luther King's famous injunction: the content of one's character *should* be judged by the color of one's skin. Thus Black people cogitate and communicate in the racially distinct, fully realized language of Ebonics; they possess their own compartmentalized culture (which white people have been "avidly imitating and appropriating from us"); and the unique "inner values" of Black people mediate the raw material of mind.[258] In personal testament, Kendi rhapsodizes over his African heritage. It "breathed life into the African American culture that raised me." His intellectual formation was "governed primarily by Black bodies, Black thoughts, Black cultures, and Black histories." Indeed,

> nearly everything I am I owe to Black space. Black neighborhood. Black church. Black college. Black studies.[259]

These avowals provoke many questions. It is strange that Kendi writes his books not in Ebonics but in English. Dare it be said that would make this avatar of antiracism a racist assimilationist? Or, perhaps, if his tracts appear well-nigh illiterate to this English-language reader's "surface-sighted eyes," that's because he is blind to their Ebonics "deep structure." It perplexes why Kendi lectures before overwhelmingly white (woke) audiences across the country. He elected to teach and preside over an antiracist research center at overwhelmingly white Boston University, and he's been a Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at the premier bastion of white intellectual culture, Harvard University. It must be a mutually mortifying experience as his white interlocutors can't possibly comprehend him, and he can't possibly translate the inherently alien African "philosophies" and "inner values" that inform his contemplations.[260] How, incidentally, could the MacArthur Foundation's white officers bestow upon Kendi a "genius" award if they were constitutionally incapable of grasping his (putative) genius? It confounds why he would kvell that he won the alabaster white National Book Award and that he is published in

white-deep-structure journals such as *The Atlantic* and the *New York Times*.[261] Forgive the heretical thought, but one gets the distinct impression that this ferocious anti-assimilationist reckons white culture to be superior. And didn't he, per many an enterprising assimilationist, bid adieu to "nearly everything" that he is and that is intrinsic to his being when he left behind his "Black space," "Black bodies," "Black thoughts," "Black cultures," "Black histories," "Black neighborhood," and headed off for white "space," "bodies," "thoughts"…? He proudly boasts of his Florida A&M University pedigree. Why, then, didn't this exemplary antiracist locate his antiracist research center, funded to the tune of $10 million by then-Twitter C.E.O. Jack Dorsey, at Florida A&M or another of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (H.B.C.U.)?

But his personal anomalies aside, the incongruous fact remains that Kendi interweaves his paeans to race consciousness with preachments decrying race consciousness:

> There is no such thing as racial ancestry;
>
> When we refer to a group as Black or White…, we are racializing that group;
>
> Racial-group behavior is a figment of the racist's imagination;
>
> Every time someone racializes behavior—describes something as "Black behavior"—they are expressing a racist idea…. To be an antiracist is … to recognize there is no such thing as Black behavior…. Black behavior is as fictitious as Black genes…. All we have are stories of individual behavior;
>
> Whenever the antiracist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the antiracist sees exactly that: individuals behaving positively or negatively, not representatives of whole races.[262]

He pays special homage to Martin Luther King's "rousing and indelible antiracist dream of children one day living 'in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.'" And to Malcolm X's "unstinting

humanism" as he proclaimed that "I'm a human being first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole."[263] So let's get this straight. Not just the surface skin color, but also the mental processes, language, values, and culture of Blacks and whites, respectively, differ, and differ in essence. But to speak of African-Americans as a biological or behavioral group is racist, as "all we have are stories of individual behavior…, not representatives of whole races"; indeed, Blacks and whites "first and foremost" share a common human essence that transcends racial difference. Something seems amiss here. Or, perhaps, this shallow white racist mind can't penetrate the deep structure of Kendi's African cultural form in which A=non-A.

Black people don't carry the scars of racist oppression

The assimilationist, according to Kendi, denigrates Black and elevates white culture. As a preliminary point, consider how much ground this formulation has already surrendered to racists. He in effect concedes that a white American culture exists hermetically sealed off from African-American culture and that this white culture can be conceptualized independently of the contributions by Black people or, for that matter, the crimes committed against Black people. The fact is, there isn't now and there never has been a white American culture apart from Black American culture, any more than there has been a Black history apart from white history. If Blacks have been "stamped from the beginning," it's whites who did the stamping; these cultures have been "from the beginning" inextricably intertwined. In any event, in yet another Sunday school sermon, Kendi preaches to his woke flock that "racial groups are equals in all the ways they are different," and that "to be antiracist" is

> to reject cultural standards and level cultural difference;
>
> to see all cultures in all their differences as on the same level;

> to think there is nothing wrong with Black people, to think that racial groups are equal.[264]

So far as an intelligible idea can be distilled from this sludge, he would appear to be saying that, even as cultures differ, none is inferior or superior to, worse or better than the other. One shouldn't pass moral judgment on cultures or place them on a hierarchy—each possesses its own unimpeachable authority, autochthonous integrity, and rational coherence. Every culture is as valid as the next, even as each is incomparable with the next. To borrow a phrase from 1960s pop philosophy, the sum and substance of Kendi's musings reduce to *I'm Okay, You're Okay*.

But if racism is constituent to one's culture, and culture can't be criticized from without, how, then, can one be an antiracist? Gandhi wrestled the whole of his adult life with the Hindu *varna* (caste) system. To stay faithful to his Hindu culture, he embraced this discriminatory social order. (He denied that the *varna* system was discriminatory even though it plainly was.) If late in life the Mahatma conceded his error and repudiated this Hindu tenet, it was in the name of and by reference to a higher moral imperative. He couldn't criticize caste from within Hindu culture so Gandhi perforce invoked a standard from without to undo the wrong; yet Kendi anathematizes criticism from without. Slavery, according to Douglass, was "interwoven with the very texture" of our culture. The Constitution, William Lloyd Garrison said, was a "covenant with death and an agreement with Hell."[265] The Abolitionists therefore appealed to an Almighty, natural right that was said to trump American law, custom, and tradition. They gestured to an extrinsic standard in order to delegitimize an intrinsic evil. Conversely, the U.S. Supreme Court anchored one of its most regressive opinions in "established usages, customs, and traditions of the people" (*Plessy*, justifying segregation). In another notorious opinion, it granted Constitutional protection

only to those liberties "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition" (*Hardwick*, denying Constitutional protection for same-sex sodomy).[266] *Culture* was thus conscripted by the Court to block social progress. The upshot is, Kendi propounds a naïve—or, less generously, thoughtless—relativism in which a culture is sacred in *all* its difference, and in which every component is beyond reproach *because* it is integral to that culture. This cultural absolutism is as reactionary an ideal as its flipside of cultural imperialism. Every extant culture contains egregious features. To "see all cultures in all their differences as on the same level" is to insulate this or that culture from warranted criticism. The critique of a given culture as often as not reposes on a *human* standard that stands outside, above, or at the margins of that culture, and that measures, ranks, the given culture on a hierarchy as honoring or dishonoring indefeasible human rights. When Bernie Sanders cast health care as a "basic human right," he was invoking a civilizational standard external to American "free market" culture, and when he recalled that we were the "only major country" lacking universal health care, he most certainly was placing American culture at the low end of the civilizational totem pole. Was that wrong?

If all racial cultures are equal and each is beyond reproach, then Black culture is—always and everywhere, in the whole and in its parts—immaculate in its perfection. If it's otherwise perceived, according to Kendi, that's because those doing the perceiving are racists. If they believe the flaws in Black culture are innate, they're racist segregationists; if they believe the flaws are corrigible, they're racist assimilationists. Whereas the assimilationist counseled "getting off crack," the antiracist "nourished Black pride by insisting that there was nothing wrong with Black people."[267] Score one for crack. If Black academic performance lags behind white performance, if schools in the Black community are "purportedly bad," it's all a racist ruse: the standard indicators fail to take account that Black people speak a

different language and process data differently. "What if," Kendi asks rhetorically,

> the intellect of a low-testing Black child in a poor Black school is different from—and not inferior to—the intellect of a high-testing White child in a rich White school?

Does he grade student papers on an Ebonics curve? Although he deplores underfunding of Black schools, he simultaneously professes that they aren't in need of more funding as Black students are doing just fine:

> The acceptance of an academic-achievement gap is just the latest method of reinforcing the oldest racist idea [of] Black intellectual inferiority.

He even reproaches "well-meaning" assimilationists who "tried to 'solve' this problem of the racial achievement gap." Why? Because these racist do-gooders spotlighted the "inferior environment" in Black schools and then "banged the drum … to get attention and funding." He goes on to blithely dismiss "mentoring and educational programs":

> all racial groups are already on the same cultural level.[268]

It must surely be a first in the annals of antiracism that a self-described antiracist *opposes* supplemental budget allocations for underperforming Black schools.

The notion of crime-ridden poor Black communities is no less a racist fiction:

> The idea of the dangerous Black neighborhood is the most dangerous racist idea.

It has been purveyed not only by racist whites who adduce spurious crime statistics but also and especially by the racist Black community:

> Rising levels of violent crime engulfed impoverished neighborhoods. Black residents bombarded their politicians and crime fighters with their racist fears of *Black* criminals as opposed to criminals. Neither the residents nor the politicians nor the crime fighters wholly saw the heroin and crack problem as a public-health crisis or the violent-crime

> problem in poor neighborhoods where Black people lived as a poverty problem. Black people seemed to be more worried about other Black people killing them in drug wars or robberies by the thousands each year than about the cancers, heart diseases, and respiratory diseases killing them by the hundreds of thousands each year. (emphasis in original)

Isn't it a tad racist for Kendi, looking down from his lofty perch, to presume that Black residents had ignorantly fixated on the Black race of the perpetrator instead of on the crime itself; that Black residents were oblivious to or too stupid to notice the social roots of violent crime; that Black residents, by focusing on crime instead of health care, got their priorities all screwed up?[269] He did a brief stint in his college years slumming in a poor Philadelphia neighborhood, which he has since parlayed to like affect/effect as Barack Obama's "community organizer" shtick: "I felt alive when I moved into this Black neighborhood." Now rolling in antiracist big bucks, it's a sure bet he ain't feeling alive *there* anymore. What's more, his condescension recalls Obama's public chastisement of Black people. "Barack been talking down to Black people," Jesse Jackson, who was present on one such occasion, whispered to a friend. "I want to cut his nuts out." Even as Kendi distances himself from Obama in his books, both tout a pseudo street cred so they can then patronize Black people. On the point of principle, surely it's possible to isolate this or that deficit, even a syndrome, without impugning the whole of Black culture.

In yet another bizarre plot twist, Kendi disparages the belief that Black people have suffered psychic wounds from racism: it's one more racist-assimilationist prejudice. Whereas "to be antiracist is to think nothing is behaviorally wrong" with Black people. In one of his signature verbal flourishes (or flops), he proclaims:

> As long as the mind oppresses the oppressed by thinking their oppressive environment has retarded their behavior, the mind can never be antiracist.

If even revered Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison comes in for a drubbing, that's because he said of the slaves' degraded condition, "Nothing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds." That's racist, as it casts doubt on the immaculate and immutable perfection of Black people. Further, only an "illogically racist mind" could imagine that slavery induced "vices" among Black people or "made Black people inferior." Two hundred and fifty years of servitude just made them "different." In another of his cringey passages, Kendi observes that "racist Americans" couldn't conceive

> that Black people had not been damaged by slavery: that Black people could dance into freedom without skipping a beat.

It would appear, then, that when the dust had settled after Juneteenth, the newly-freed slaves, having endured a lifetime of battery and brutalization, and now stripped of shelter and livelihood—they cavorted as if one big happy, huggable family, just like The Jeffersons and The Huxtables; as if poised to boogie down the *Soul Train* line.[270] Douglass, who, it might be thought, knew a thing or two about slavery, did not view matters as quite this rosy. Like Garrison, he shined a harsh light on the "mental and moral wrongs" inflicted by slavery, its "dehumanizing character," its "obliterating from the mind and heart of the slave, all just ideas of the sacredness of *the family*," its "soul-crushing and death-dealing character," its "ten thousand horrors…, striking hard upon the [slave's] sensitive soul, [that] have bruised, and battered, and stung" him, its "deliberate and constant war upon human nature itself, [that] robs the slave of personality, cuts him off from the human family, and sinks him below even the brute"; the "broken spirit" of slaves, their lack of "any moral training, other than that which came by the slave driver's lash," their "enforced degradation" and "enforced ignorance of two hundred years." The trauma wrought by slavery, Douglass reckoned, could not be "blotted out in a day or a year or even in a generation. The slave would yet

remain in some sense a slave, long after the chains are taken from his limbs"; "the transition from degradation to respectability was indeed great, and to get from one to the other without carrying some marks of one's former condition, is truly a difficult matter." *Enforced degradation*, *enforced ignorance*, *below even the brute*: on the evidence, it would appear that Douglass was a yet more egregious racist than Garrison.[271] And Du Bois, who adjudged American slavery "the ultimate degradation of man,"[272] was more emphatic than even Douglass that the moral blight of slavery retarded the freedman's progress (more on which presently).

It would profit at this juncture to take a step back so as to take stock of Kendi's contentions. He purports that it's racist to infer that slavery was not just brutal but that it also brutalized Black people, that the hurt and harm suffered by slaves was not just outward but also inward. But would any rational, let alone empathetic, person want to argue that the former inmate of a concentration camp or federal penitentiary, the victim of abusive parents or an abusive relationship, wouldn't be psychologically seared and debilitated by such an experience? So how could it possibly be racist to assert that "two hundred years heavy with human bondage" will have induced deleterious habits of mind and body, and deposited on the souls of former slaves a baleful burden of psychic afflictions, the cultural transmission of which undercut the freedmen's ability to compete in the new social order thrust upon them? The miracle would be were it otherwise, and it's certainly no shame to acknowledge it. Indeed, why would one *want* to deny it: isn't its "soul-crushing" stripes the blackest mark against slavery as well as a plausible causal factor behind this or that socioeconomic debit in the African-American ledger? "All too few people realize," Martin Luther King rued, "how slavery and racial segregation have scarred the soul and wounded the spirit of the black man."[273] Clearly, Kendi cannot be counted among those insightful few.

Noted Black psychologist Kenneth Clark fares even worse than Garrison. He is chastised for speculating that racism and poverty might account for the higher incidence of deviant behavior in Black communities. However many blows and batterings they might endure, however many kicks and pummelings they might suffer, Black psyches, ever resilient, ever resourceful, ever renascent, emerge, in Kendi's telling, ever triumphant and pristine:

> They invent and reinvent cultures and behaviors that may be different but never inferior to those of residents in richer neighborhoods.

If Malcolm X embarked on a life of petty crime, only a racist, it seems, would connect some of the dots back to his grade-school teacher's admonition, "A lawyer—that's no realistic goal for a nigger." Indeed, Kendi categorically declares that

> This stereotype of the hopeless, defeated, unmotivated poor Black is without evidence.

It *is* true that "racist ideas … manipulate us into seeing people as the problem, instead of the policies that ensnare them." It's just as surely true that, absent a massive infusion of material resources, it's impossible to cut the Gordian knot of "institutionalized pathology" depicted in Clark's *Dark Ghetto*. But, by denying racism's psychic inflictions, doesn't just a flea's, or fool's, hop separate Kendi from the diehard racist who purports that Black people conjure up the crippling psychological effects of racism as a crutch?[274]

A popular French saying declares, *les extrêmes se touchent*: extremes meet. Thus, the strange political bedfellows of Black nationalist Marcus Garvey and the Ku Klux Klan. Kendi is cast in the Garvey mold, but without his master's saving graces. The case he mounts against assimilationism proves on closer inspection to be a grand—or better still, grandiose—apologia for racism. He so apotheosizes cultures in general as to render them beyond *any* reproach. He so elevates Black culture as to deny it has suffered from *any* deficits. He so

ennobles Black people as to gainsay that racism causes them *any* psychic injury. If one were to plot on a Venn diagram the conceptions of Kendi the antiracist and the rabid racist who defended the "Southern way of life" and denied that happy-go-lucky "Sambo" suffered under slavery, the overlap of the two circles would almost certainly exceed the spaces distinguishing them. Here, finally, is Kendi waxing prophetic on the assimilationist disease wracking the American body-politic and the antiracist panacea for it:

> The American body is the White body. The Black body strives to assimilate into the American body. The American body rejects the Black body. The Black body separates from the American body. The Black body is instructed to assimilate into the American body—and history and consciousness duel anew. But there is a way to get free. To be antiracist is to emancipate oneself from the dueling consciousness. To be antiracist is to conquer the assimilationist consciousness and the segregationist consciousness. The White body no longer presents itself as the American body; the Black body no longer strives to be the American body, knowing there is no such thing as the American body, only American bodies, racialized by power.[275]

Did the publisher forget to translate this passage from Ebonics to English?

Was W. E. B. Du Bois A Racist?

W. E. B. Du Bois wasn't a brilliant Black intellectual. He was a brilliant intellectual, without racial caveat. It humbles as it overwhelms, his range and depth of learnedness, his capacity for inductive generalization born of both his broad knowledge as well as his attentiveness to detail as the sine qua non of true knowledge. He exemplified Thomas Edison's ethic, "Genius is one percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration." Du Bois recalled in his memoirs that one girl in his grade school added up columns of figures faster than him. Otherwise, he makes no mention of a worthy rival in his many years of schooling

through his graduate studies, almost certainly because there wasn't any. (His doctoral dissertation on the suppression of the African slave trade was the inaugural volume of the Harvard Historical Studies series.) His biographer marvels at the some ten hours Du Bois put in each day at his desk in concentrated mental toil.[276] Come hell or high water, he turned in punctually at 10:00 p.m., but not before immersing himself in quality literature at day's end. (If he was also a stand-alone stylist, it traced back to this literary regimen.) He studied at a time when to speak of "training" signified something of substance. He first attended Harvard, which, although the preeminent university in the U.S., was something of a backwater internationally. But then he was off to matriculate at the great University of Berlin, where he was no longer shadowed and weighed down by the incubus of racism. (He would remember a lecture at which the redoubtable Heinrich von Treitschke blurted out, "*Die Mulatten sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig*"—"Mulattoes are inferior; they feel themselves inferior!"—but generously chalked it up as a benign idiosyncrasy.)[277] Du Bois memorialized Europe as the place where he was first able to "look at the world as a man…, unveiled by the accident of color."[278] But after returning home, he suffered one wretched professional slight after another and, despite his proven track record of research and publication, would be left hanging—the shamefulness of this still galls the reader—as he strained for grants to subsidize his scholarly projects, as ambitious as they were fastidious. Even as he managed to earn their grudging acknowledgment, Du Bois demurred at socializing with his white colleagues. He couldn't but intuit the condescension, be it conscious or unconscious, that lurked

behind their encomia. If he could come off as arrogant and aloof,[279] it was, as Du Bois retrospectively parsed it,[280] a defense mechanism to protect his self-regard against patronizing white patrons, who couldn't quite reconcile that he, in the first and the final analysis a Black man, held himself their equal, really was their equal, and wouldn't brook their skepticism, however veiled, of his cerebral parity (if not superiority).[281] It might seem callous to say, and Du Bois would probably recoil at it, but it was perhaps his great good fortune not to be crowned with professional recognition.[282] The racist barriers thrown up against him simultaneously shielded Du Bois from the dual allurements of fame and fortune that, in the course of their ascent to stardom, would later prove fatal to many a Black academic. Not too long ago, Harvard assembled a "dream team" of African-American scholars, some of whom possessed formidable talent. But en masse and all told, they produced less of enduring value than Du Bois did in any one year at financially strapped Atlanta University (an H.B.C.U.). The moral is, it can be a blessing in the long run *not* to be discovered. It's also true to say, however, that Du Bois probably wouldn't have succumbed to earthly blandishments as he embarked on his life's mission. From an early age he set as his raison d'être to eradicate the color line, not, however, by prestidigitation, demagogy or pyrotechnic (even were that possible), but, on the contrary, by clinging fast to Truth, as the sure method and guarantor for resolving "the problem of the twentieth century," and also, perhaps more so, as the only modus operandi worthy of a scholar beholden to the life of the mind: "The thinker must think for truth, not for fame."[283] What stands in relief in Du Bois, as both scholar and personality, is his utter fearlessness and inner calm in the face

of Truth. It always helps, never hinders; he is ever patient with it, never fazed by it; if an egregious practice be discovered among Black people, it can be rationally accounted for, without diminishing Black humanity. Consider, by way of illustration, his treatment of corruption during Reconstruction. It was a staple of academic and popular literature when Du Bois wrote *Black Reconstruction* (1935) that the postbellum governments in the South, presided over by Northern "carpetbaggers" and newly freed slaves, were riddled with graft and theft. Du Bois doesn't deny that corruption was rife; on the contrary, he keeps returning to it in excruciating detail. However, he situates and analyzes this phenomenon from multiple angles: the gamut of U.S. politics at every level of government was infected by venality; widespread poverty in the South was fertile soil for corruption to pullulate; Southern whites deliberately abetted jobbery to discredit the Reconstruction experiment in radical democracy; Negro voters and officeholders committed to social uplift were outnumbered and outflanked by Republicans and Democrats alike mired in graft; corruption was as pervasive in Southern states where Negroes didn't as where they did figure in public life; what was denoted corruption was often public debt accrued to subsidize public services (e.g., schools) hitherto unknown in the South; most of the large-scale peculation traced back to the "financial graft of Wall Street and its agents."[284] Still, Du Bois doesn't shy away from acknowledging that the hands of the newly freed Negroes weren't entirely clean. Instead, he coolly parses the phenomenon:

> How far, then, was postbellum corruption due to Negroes? Only in so far as they represented ignorance and poverty and were thus peculiarly susceptible to petty bribery. No one contends that any considerable amount of money went to them. There were some reports of show and extravagance among them, but

> the great thieves were always white men; very few Negro leaders were specifically accused of theft, and again seldom in these cases were the accusations proven. Usually they were vague slurs resting on the assumption that all Negroes steal. Petty bribery of members of Reconstruction legislatures, white and black, was widespread; but Wallace [an historian] in Florida shows the desperate inner turmoil of the Negroes to counteract this within their own ranks; and outstanding cases of notably incorruptible Negro leaders … are well known. Certainly the mass of Negroes were unbribable when it came to demands for land and education and other things, the beneficent object of which they could thoroughly understand. But they were peculiarly susceptible to bribes when it was a matter of personal following of demagogues who catered to their likes and weaknesses. The mass of Negroes were accused of selling votes and influence for small sums and of thus being easily bought up by big thieves; but even in this, they were usually bought up by pretended friends and not bribed against their beliefs or by enemies. To the principles that they understood and knew, they were true; but there were many things connected with government and its technical details which they did not know; in other words, they were ignorant and poor, and the ignorant and poor can always be misled and bribed. What made the Negro poor and ignorant? Surely, it was slavery, and he tried with his vote to escape slavery.[285]

Even as he forthrightly notices incriminating facts, Du Bois does not affect a spurious balance to ingratiate himself with white interlocutors. On the contrary, he underscores that many Negro officeholders stood in the forefront denouncing corruption and, in any event, the Negro was but a bit player in this squalid business: "least of all was it the guilt of Negroes"; "without a doubt many of the colored leaders shared in this graft, but from the very nature of the case it was not a large share"; "the very last place where the blame for the situation could, by the wildest imagination, be placed, was upon the newly enfranchised black labor"; "to charge this debt to the Negroes is idiotic."[286] Likewise, Du Bois refuses to truck in morally obtuse pieties delivered from on high. Of one ballyhooed instance of corruption in South Carolina, he derisively observed:

> The state got a capitol decked out in the flamboyant taste of the day, but we must not forget that for the first time in their drab life, representatives of black and white labor, toiling in the fields and swamps and living in the unpaved slums of the towns, saw something that meant to them beauty and luxury—saw it and touched it, and owned it. And somehow, I have more respect for the golden spittoons of freed Negro lawmakers in 1872, than for the chaste elegance of the colonial mansions of slave-drivers in 1860.[287]

In other words, after all they endured, after all that they suffered, Du Bois was not about to wag his forefinger at the newly emancipated slaves (but *also* poor whites) if, for an ephemeral moment, they imbibed a nip of *la dolce vita*. Here, then, in a nutshell, is the Du Boisian temperament and sensibility: facing up to the facts as they present themselves; unapologetically but also judiciously analyzing them; not concealing inconvenient facts (or source material) that might appear to contradict his thesis;[288] and, ultimately, not losing sight of the bigger picture, in its historical and moral dimensions, while articulating it, if the occasion warrants, in outrage, ridicule, and mockery. He is the staid scholar but also, having earned it by his exemplary life, the prophetic voice.

Du Bois looms large in Ibram X. Kendi's "definitive history of racist ideas."[289] He is said to have started out a "racist" as he believed that African-Americans "had been socially and morally crippled by slavery" and functioned at a "low social level."[290] But later on, Du Bois allegedly purged himself of this poison: his "ideas amazingly transfigured into a single consciousness of antiracism."[291] The inclusion, even if temporary, of Du Bois in Kendi's anti-pantheon discombobulates. It can fairly be said that, in his long, eventful life, ever-grasping for an elusive truth in an ever-changing reality, an ever work-in-progress, Du Bois passed through many, seemingly contradictory, phases: integrationist

and separatist, anticommunist and communist, elitist and democrat, racialist and universalist.[292] But *racist*—how could it possibly be said of Du Bois that he—ever—upheld the subordination or doubted the irreducible equality of Black people? "Whatever else he was, with his multitude of careers and professional titles, he was first and always a black man," Martin Luther King wrote in a moving tribute to Du Bois. "His love and faith in Negroes permeate every sentence of his writings and every act of his life."[293] In any event, it's unclear just when his antiracist epiphany occurred, but Kendi does describe Du Bois' second published work, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), as "thoroughly antiracist."[294] At the same time, Kendi purports that it is racist to ascribe any imperfections to Black (and African) culture or the Black (and African) community. To be antiracist is to uphold the perfection of Black (and African) culture as a whole and in its constituent parts. Tedious as it might seem, it illuminates to test these propositions against Du Bois' actual corpus.[295] If Kendi is to be credited, beginning with *Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois depicted Black (and African) culture as on a par with all other cultures, and Black (and African) people as devoid of characterological flaws—in particular, of flaws that traced back to slavery. But is that what Du Bois wrote?

Race and racism

In analyses notable for their clinical sang-froid, Du Bois disputes the existence of biological races. The "physical and measurable differences" between persons and groups of persons, according to him, "fade into each other so insensibly that we can only indicate the main divisions in broad outline," while neither "psychological and mental differences"

nor a correlation between "physical and mental traits" have been established with any approach to certainty. Whereas humanity divides up physically by skin color and hair texture into three stocks—Caucasian, Negroid, Mongoloid—the evidence is wanting that "they stand for real and more subtle differences."[296] Du Bois persuasively discounts the results of "intelligence tests" as biased in content,[297] administration,[298] and assessment.[299] Moreover, each time the tenuous foundation of the "scientific proof" is exposed, an altogether new "scientific proof" is magically adduced.[300] Science normally advances by each innovator "standing on the shoulders of giants" who came before. But when it comes to the alleged hereditary deficit in Black intelligence, each innovator, discarding whole cloth the preceding "proof," starts from scratch—or stands, so it appears, on the shoulders of a previous dwarf.[301] However, doubting as he does purported scientific proofs of Negro mental inferiority, confident as he is that he's parsed the alleged evidence to defeat, Du Bois nonetheless acknowledges the provisionality of his findings: "we have as yet only tentative measurements and limited studies."[302] He doesn't cast taboos on, rule out of bounds or cordon off, cower or quiver before, further inquiry; on the contrary, he ever welcomes the challenge, as he's invested above all not in this or that dogma, however personally congenial its upshot might be, but, as both scholar and activist, in anchoring his beliefs in the granite bedrock of Truth.

"Let it therefore be said, once for all," Du Bois declares in his panorama of *Black Folk Then and Now*, "that racial inferiority is not the cause of anti-Negro prejudice."[303] So whence does it arise? In the course of his life, Du Bois' position

evolved as he eventually arrived at a multi-causal explanation: *Ignorance*. Upon embarking on his life's mission, this most cerebral of scholars was convinced that the degraded condition of Negroes could be overcome if their plight was subjected to cold, rational, social-scientific analysis. His *Philadelphia Negro* exquisitely distills this spirit. But Du Bois subsequently came to realize that "there was evidently evil and hindrance blocking the way.... Not science alone could settle this matter."[304] *Profits*. Chief among the obstacles to effacing the color line, Du Bois concluded after sojourning in his ancestral home, were the profits to be had by a "minority and a small minority" from super-exploitation of Black labor: "I think it was in Africa that I came more clearly to see the close connection between race and wealth. The fact that even in the minds of the most dogmatic supporters of race theories and believers in the inferiority of colored folk to white, there was a conscious or unconscious determination to increase their incomes by taking full advantage of this belief. And then gradually this thought was metamorphosed into a realization that the income-bearing value of race prejudice was the cause and not the result of theories of race inferiority; that particularly in the United States the income of the Cotton Kingdom based on black slavery caused the passionate belief in Negro inferiority and the determination to enforce it even by arms."[305] *Competition*. It was not only the white monied classes, however, that profited from racism. So did white workers. Although "race prejudice" played its part, Du Bois reckoned that the preponderant motive behind white working-class racism was rational calculation compounded by status seeking. White workers instrumentalized racism to lock Negroes out of the most remunerative jobs, on the one hand,

and to bar Negroes, grown accustomed to dirt wages, from bidding down white competition, on the other: "The real motives back of this exclusion are plain: a large part is simple race prejudice, always strong in working classes and intensified by the peculiar history of the Negro in this country.… The workmen plainly see that a large amount of competition can be shut off by taking advantage of public opinion and drawing the color line. Moreover, in this there is one thoroughly justifiable consideration that plays a great part: namely, the Negroes are used to low wages—can live on them, and consequently would fight less fiercely than most whites against reduction."[306] But beyond and complementary to this material factor, poor whites, who would otherwise occupy the lowest rung on the social totem pole, could derive psychic gratification in the knowledge that Negroes stood a notch below them; indeed, if the price of making common cause with Negro workers and jointly gaining a higher wage was equalizing the social condition of Negroes, then whites preferred a lower wage if higher status was concomitant to it: they were "convinced that the degradation of Negro labor was more fundamental than the uplift of white labor," and were "induced to prefer poverty to equality with the Negro."[307]

Irrationality. Just as Du Bois came to esteem Marx, so he also fell under the spell of Freud. The "unconscious," "irrational" aspect of racism, "unpierced by reason," the "darkest passions" it released—not least the "racial sex jealousy" of whites, climaxing in ghoulish lynchings of alleged Black rapists—gained salience in his later meditations.[308] This facet of racism was also clearly a source of discomfort to him, tinging his scholarship with if not despair then pathos and pessimism, as he wasn't able to lay out a lucid political

roadmap to overcome it. He attached a clear priority to extirpating the exploitive economic roots of racism, to level this grossly unequal playing field. But when it came to racism's irrational strand, Du Bois could only offer nebulous formulae and signposts, along with the cautionary that, deeply entrenched as it was in the psyche, tracing back to "a racial folk-lore grounded on centuries of instinct, habit and thought and implemented by the conditioned reflex of visible color," the battle to rid humanity of all color prejudice would perforce be protracted, "a long siege against the strongholds of color caste."[309]

Culture

If the concept of "Negro race" was devoid of scientific content, still, according to Du Bois, the Negro people—whose "badge" is skin color—have forged a special bond, as they have traversed "a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory…; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas."[310] Adducing a broad array of proofs, Du Bois honors Africa's rich cultural inheritance, "as original as any art, and … in the main indigenous, authentic and beautiful."[311] At the same time, he does not recoil from acknowledging "cruelty and oppression" in Africa's past right up to the present—slavery, cannibalism, etc. He doesn't, however, stop there: by situating these phenomena in historical, cultural, and comparative context, Du Bois is able, without trace of cant or apology, to account reasonably for them.[312] He also highlights facets of American Negro culture tracing back to Africa that deserve

admiration such as the "proverbial good nature and candor of the Negro."[313] However, Du Bois once again does not shrink from forthrightly acknowledging that, even as they do not suffer from *natural* defect or deficit, not only American Negroes but as well colored people in general lag palpably behind white European culture:

> Negroes are not inherently ugly nor congenitally stupid. They are not naturally criminal and their poverty and ignorance today have clear and well-known and remediable causes. All this is true; *and yet what every colored man living today knows is that by practical present measurement Negroes today are inferior to whites.* The white folk of the world are richer and more intelligent; they live better; have better government; have better legal systems; have built more impressive cities, larger systems of communication and they control a larger part of the earth than all the colored peoples together. Against this colored folk may certainly bring many countervailing considerations. But putting these aside, there remains the other fact that the mass of the colored peoples in Asia and Africa, in North America and the West Indies and in South America and in the South Sea Islands are in the mass ignorant, diseased, and inefficient; that the governments which they have evolved, even allowing for the interested interference of the white world, have seldom reached the degree of efficiency of modern European governments; and that particularly in the use, increase, and distribution of wealth, in the regulation of human services, they have at best fallen behind the accomplishment of modern England, France and the United States. It may be said, and with very strong probability back of such assertion, there is no reason to doubt, that whatever white folk have accomplished, black, brown and yellow folk might have done possibly in differing ways with different results. Certainly modern civilization is too new and has steered too crooked a course and been too much a matter of chance and fate to make any final judgment as to the abilities of humankind. *All this I strongly believe and yet today we are faced by these uncomforting facts: the ignorance, poverty and inefficiency of the darker peoples; the wealth, power and technical triumph of the whites.*
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> *A perfectly obvious fact … is that most Negroes in the United States today occupy a low cultural status; both low in itself and low as compared with the national average in the land.* There are cultured individuals and groups among them. All Negroes do not fall culturally below all whites. But if one selects any one of the obviously low culture groups in the United States, the proportion of Negroes who belong to it will be larger than the Negro proportion in the total population. Nor is there anything singular about it; the real miracle would be if this were not so.

> Former slavery, present poverty and ignorance, with the inevitable resulting sickness and crime, are adequate social explanation…. *No matter what the true reasons are, or where the blame lies, the fact remains that among twelve million American Negroes, there are today poverty, ignorance, bad manners, disease, and crime.*[314] (emphases added)

It repays to examine Du Bois' sociology of these Negro afflictions:

Poverty and crime

Du Bois conducted an exhaustive survey of the Philadelphia Negro at the tail end of the nineteenth century. Even more than a hundred years later, its painstaking detail, power of analysis, and grace of presentation, reward a close reading. He devotes considerable space to the twin plagues of poverty and crime in the Negro community. The exceptional poverty he attributes primarily to:

- *slavery's legacy,* such as the Negro's lack of vocational preparedness and indolent work habits. "The Negro … has two especial difficulties: his training as a slave and freedman has not been such as make the average of the race as efficient and reliable workmen as the average native American or as many foreign immigrants. The Negro is, as a rule, willing, honest and good-natured; but he is also, as a rule, careless, unreliable and unsteady. This is without doubt to be expected in a people who for generations have been trained to shirk work; but an historical excuse counts for little in the whirl and battle of bread-winning."[315]

- *color prejudice,* which hampered Negro access to better-paying jobs. "The sorts of work open to Negroes are not only restricted by their own lack of training but

> also by discrimination against them on account of their race;… their economic rise is not only hindered by their present poverty, but also by a widespread inclination to shut against them many doors of advancement open to the talented and efficient of other races."[316]

Exceptional poverty, according to Du Bois, ineluctably bred exceptional crime. Even as he points up the racial and class biases of crime statistics, still, committed as he is to Truth and not scoring points at its expense, Du Bois does not dodge the bedrock fact of disproportionate crime in the Negro community:

> That it is a vast problem a glance at statistics will show; and since 1880 it has been steadily growing. At the same time crime is a difficult subject to study, more difficult to analyze into its sociological elements, and most difficult to cure or suppress. It is a phenomenon that stands not alone, but rather as a symptom of countless wrong social conditions. The simplest, but crudest, measure of crime is found in the total arrests for a period of years. The value of such figures is lessened by the varying efficiency and diligence of the police, by discrimination in the administration of law, and by unwarranted arrests. *And yet the figures roughly measure crime.*
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> It seems plain [from published crime statistics] that the 4 per cent of the population of Philadelphia having Negro blood furnished from 1885 to 1889, 14 per cent of the serious crimes, and from 1890 to 1895, 22½ per cent. This of course assumes that the convicts in the penitentiary represent with a fair degree of accuracy the crime committed. The assumption is not wholly true; in convictions by human courts the rich always are favored somewhat at the expense of the poor, the upper classes at the expense of the unfortunate classes, and whites at the expense of Negroes. We know for instance that certain crimes are not punished in Philadelphia because the public opinion is lenient, as for instance embezzlement, forgery, and certain sorts of stealing; on the other hand a commercial community is apt to punish with severity petty thieving, breaches of the peace, and personal assault or burglary.… We must add to this the influences of social position and connections in procuring whites pardons or lighter sentences. It has been charged by some Negroes that color prejudice plays some part, but there is no tangible proof of this, save perhaps that there is apt to be a certain presumption of guilt when a Negro is accused, on the part of

> police, public and judge. All these considerations modify somewhat our judgment of the moral status of the mass of Negroes. *And yet, with all allowances, there remains a vast problem of crime.*[317] (emphases added)

Persuaded as he was that disproportionate Negro crime can be addressed clinically—i.e., without resort to special pleading or fear of racial stigmatizing—Du Bois goes on to isolate the interplay behind it of these factors: "slavery and emancipation with their attendant phenomena of ignorance, lack of discipline, and moral weakness"; lack of access by Negroes to gainful employment and their consequent poverty; the mass influx of Negroes from the rural South, which exacerbated competition for already scarce job opportunities, compounded by the inability of these new arrivals to cope with the anomie of an urban milieu; the 1893 economic depression that hit hardest "economic substrata." He additionally cautions that the perpetrators mostly comprised "young men" who had hardened into a "distinct class of habitual criminals," and that "to this criminal class and not to the great mass of Negroes the bulk of the serious crime perpetrated by this race should be charged."[318] Of the elusive causal relationship between crime and racism, two passages by Du Bois, as nuanced as they are poignant, merit lengthy quotation:

> [The single most important factor to consider is] the environment in which a Negro finds himself—the world of custom and thought in which he must live and work, the physical surrounding of house and home and ward, the moral encouragements and discouragements which he encounters. We dimly seek to define this social environment partially when we talk of color prejudice—but this is but a vague characterization; what we want to study is not a vague thought or feeling but its concrete manifestations. We know pretty well what the surroundings are of a young white lad, or a foreign immigrant who comes to this great city to join in its organic life. We know what influences and limitations surround him, to what he may attain, what his companionships are, what his encouragements are, what his drawbacks. This we must know in regard to the Negro if we would study his social condition. His strange social

> environment must have immense effect on his thought and life, his work and crime, his wealth and pauperism. That this environment differs and differs broadly from the environment of his fellows, we all know, but we do not know just how it differs. The real foundation of the difference is the widespread feeling all over the land, in Philadelphia as well as in Boston and New Orleans, that the Negro is something less than an American and ought not to be much more than what he is. Argue as we may for or against this idea, we must as students recognize its presence and its vast effects.
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> It would, of course, be idle to assert that most of the Negro crime was caused by prejudice; the violent economic and social changes which the last fifty years have brought to the American Negro, the sad social history that preceded these changes, have all contributed to unsettle morals and pervert talents. Nevertheless it is certain that Negro prejudice in cities like Philadelphia has been a vast factor in aiding and abetting all other causes which impel a half-developed race to recklessness and excess. Certainly a great amount of crime can be without doubt traced to the discrimination against Negro boys and girls in the matter of employment…. The connection of crime and prejudice is, on the other hand, neither simple nor direct. The boy who is refused promotion in his job as porter does not go out and snatch somebody's pocketbook. Conversely the loafers at Twelfth and Kater streets [in Philadelphia], and the thugs in the county prison are not usually graduates of high schools who have been refused work. The connections are much more subtle and dangerous; it is the atmosphere of rebellion and discontent that unrewarded merit and reasonable but unsatisfied ambition make. The social environment of excuse, listless despair, careless indulgence and lack of inspiration to work is the growing force that turns black boys and girls into gamblers, prostitutes and rascals. And this social environment has been built up slowly out of the disappointments of deserving men and the sloth of the unawakened.[319]

This presentation in the round of Negro poverty and crime, and of their roots stretching back to slavery and the oppressive social system that succeeded it, is also to be found in Du Bois' later works such as *The Souls of Black Folk*[320] and *Dusk of Dawn.*[321]

Family and sexual mores

One of Du Bois' central preoccupations in *Philadelphia Negro* is the plight of the Negro family. The wrenching dislocation of

hearth and home under slavery couldn't but, according to Du Bois, have a corrosive effect. The "promiscuous herding of the West Indian plantation" followed by the "lax moral habits" of plantation life in the American South resulted postbellum in a "large amount of cohabitation without marriage" as well as, on the margins, "sexual promiscuity and the absence of a real home life." Apart from the residues of slavery, Du Bois also pointed to the unique sociology of Negro life as undermining family stability. On the one hand, "oppressed by the peculiar lonesomeness of a great city," recent migrants from the South "thoughtlessly marry" and then quickly part ways as the marriage dissolves under financial pressures; on the other hand, unable to find gainful employment, many Negroes opted for irregular cohabitation instead of marriage, which "has had its ill effects on the sexual morality…, especially, too, since their hereditary training in this respect has been lax." Although Du Bois commends the enormous distance traversed by Negroes, he doesn't blind himself to pervasive and persistent deviance in their family life. "On the whole," he concludes, the Negro family "is a more successful institution than we had a right to expect."

> The great weakness of the Negro family is still lack of respect for the marriage bond, inconsiderate entrance into it, and bad household economy and family government. Sexual looseness then arises as a secondary consequence, bringing adultery and prostitution in its train. And these results come largely from the postponement of marriage among the young. Such are the fruits of sudden social revolution.
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> [Among] the great mass of the Negro population we see undoubted effort … to establish homes. Two great hindrances, however, cause much mischief: the low wages of men and the high rents. The low wages of men make it necessary for mothers to work and in numbers of cases to work away from home several days in the week. This leaves the children without guidance or restraint for the better part of the day—a thing disastrous to manners and morals…. The home

> was destroyed by slavery, struggled up after emancipation, and is again not exactly threatened, but neglected in the life of city Negroes.[322]

The causes behind the fragility of the Negro family and attendant sexual licentiousness figured as objects of inquiry in Du Bois' subsequent studies,[323] in particular, an Atlanta University monograph he edited, *The Negro American Family*. He points up disturbing aspects of the Negro family and Negro home life that trace back to slavery ("there was the absence of the father—that is, the lack of authority in the slave father to govern or protect his family"), and poverty ("the moral and educational effect of living in one room is very bad"), exacerbated by contemporary color prejudice. But for all that, Du Bois is moved to conclude on a sanguine note that "most of the tendencies are in the right direction, and a healthier home life is in prospect."[324] He's still censorious of Negro "sexual morals," which he deems "the point where the Negro American is furthest behind modern civilization" and "the greatest single plague spot among Negro Americans," while its "greatest cause," he hastens to add, "is slavery and the present utter disregard of a black woman's virtue and self-respect, both in law court and custom in the South." All the same, here too, he optimistically concludes that "there is more female purity, more male continence, and a healthier home life today than ever before among Negroes in America." One refreshing novelty in Du Bois' otherwise judgmental tone is that he glimpses in the Negro's attitude toward sex a salubrious earthiness:

> The Negro woman, with her strong desire for motherhood, may teach modern civilization that virginity, save as a means of healthy motherhood, is an evil and not a divine attribute. That while the sexual appetite is the most easily abused of all human appetites and most deadly when perverted, that nevertheless it is a legitimate, beneficent appetite when normal, and that no

> civilization can long survive which stigmatizes it as essentially nasty and only to be discussed in shame faced whispers. The Negro attitude in these matters is in many respects healthier and more reasonable. Their sexual passions are strong and frank, but they are, despite example and temptation, only to a limited degree perverted or merely commercial.[325]

* * *

The moment is, alack and alas, upon us to descend from the sublime heights of intellectual inquiry scaled by W. E. B. Du Bois to the squalid depths of wokeness mined by Ibram X. Kendi. It will be recalled that Kendi flings the epithet *racist* at whoever shelters the conviction that "a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior." It is racist to believe that Black people after Emancipation carried with them the damaging psychological baggage of their servitude, and that—largely owing to slavery—the Black community was afflicted by crime and family dysfunction. On the contrary, according to this "definitive" historian, Black people, ever poised on the *Soul Train* runway, "could dance into freedom without skipping a beat." At the same time, Du Bois receives kudos from Kendi as his "ideas amazingly transfigured into a single consciousness of antiracism." He specifically points to Du Bois' "thoroughly antiracist" *The Philadelphia Negro*. Here's the, as it were, rub: Du Bois plainly did not turn a blind eye to the high incidence of Black crime and family dysfunction in *Philadelphia Negro*, and he didn't subsequently revise, let alone retract, these opinions. He traced back these communal infirmities in the main to slavery's psychological and structural legacy compounded by contemporary color prejudice.[326] Protesting that crime statistics are biased, Kendi goes on to assert that "the idea of the dangerous Black neighborhood is the most dangerous racist idea." However, Du

Bois also pointed up the bias of crime statistics "*and yet*," as he put it, "with all allowances, there remains a vast problem of crime." Kendi deplores E. Franklin Frazier's "assimilationist"—that is, racist—depiction of an afflicted Black family but, as Kendi himself concedes, Frazier was just following in the path blazed by Du Bois. Whereas Kendi declares it racist to believe that "a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior," Du Bois repeatedly, at length, and without equivocation stated: "what every colored man living today knows is that by practical present measurement Negroes today are inferior to whites"; "we are faced by these uncomforting facts: the ignorance, poverty and inefficiency of the darker peoples; the wealth, power and technical triumph of the whites." The bottom line is, to judge by Kendi's definition of a racist, Du Bois most emphatically was one—and yet, Kendi sings paeans to Du Bois' "single consciousness of antiracism."[327] The point is not whether Du Bois was right or wrong. He no doubt made his share of errors, but it would appear that he was more often right than wrong; that even when wrong he was more intellectually fertile in his error than those who were right; that he was ignored by his contemporaries to their detriment; and that even at this late date he still richly repays reading. The issue at hand, however, is that the Du Bois depicted by Kendi bears tenuous relationship to the real Du Bois. Either Kendi didn't read Du Bois, or his core concept of "antiracism" is devoid of content, or, as is most probable, both are true—he barely set eyes on Du Bois' oeuvre while "antiracism" is the conceptual equivalent of Silly Putty, molded and remolded at childish whim. Still, if so much space has been set aside in consideration of Du Bois, and if he has been quoted at

extraordinary length, it is to illustrate a much larger point: to wit, the difference between a scholar and a propagandist. Du Bois doesn't hurl epithets to cordon off from scrutiny areas of inquiry, but, on the contrary, patiently parses contending evidence, however much it might personally offend him. Even when he might, Du Bois refrains from declaring final victory. "Of the psychological and mental differences which exist between individuals and groups," he opines, "we have as yet only tentative measurements and limited studies." Sifting through this available evidence, Du Bois finds it wanting, but he also leaves open the possibility that further investigation might yield another conclusion; the argument hasn't yet been decided once and for all. The propagandist, on the other hand, cries racism at every turn in the suppressive name of antiracism. Even as he recognizes that the bulk of statistical evidence proving Black criminality is biased, Du Bois doesn't brandish this indisputable bias to dodge reality, as he goes on to insist, "And yet, with all allowances, there remains a vast problem of crime." The propagandist, on the other hand, cries racism at mere mention of this "vast problem." For Du Bois, there was no such thing as an *a priori* wrong conclusion; there was only a conclusion *proven* wrong. Being a social scientist (not a propagandist), but also convinced as he was, by study and sympathy, of "the essential humanity of Negroes, in their ability to be educated, to do the work of the modern world, to take their place as equal citizens with others,"[328] Du Bois did not recoil from isolating regressive features of Negro life that carried over from slavery, not in order to curry favor with white interlocutors, but because, as a point of professional honor and pride, his enduring, humbling beholdenness to Truth demanded it. And—what's more to the point—

committed as he was to the betterment of his people, not bowing to current fashion if at the price of their betterment, he said what needed to be said, as, it being Truth and as such ever humankind's benefactor, never its enemy, his people stood to benefit by it in their quest for full equality. Of those historians who traduced the record of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction in the name of "healing our nation's wounds," Du Bois wrote:

> But are these reasons of courtesy and philanthropy sufficient for denying Truth? If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with that accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be set some standards of ethics in research and interpretation. If, on the other hand, we are going to use history for our pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history either as a science or as an art using the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish.
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> What is the object of writing the history of Reconstruction? Is it to wipe out the disgrace of a people which fought to make slaves of Negroes?… Is it to prove that Negroes were black angels? No, it is simply to establish the Truth, on which Right in the future may be built.[329]

If this cautionary is to be honored, however, then it must be abided across the board. It should stand as a rebuke not only to those who would "use history for our pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego," but also to those who would use history as a plaything to pose and posture in the Age of Wokeness upon us, to those who would stoke the racial ego by propagating a "false but pleasurable sense" of a Black community devoid of afflictions except those conjured up by ubiquitous white *and Black* racist bogeymen. On such a factitious foundation, born not of History but of comic book

superheroes and supervillains, a better, more just world cannot be built. "As a student of science," Du Bois gracefully and graciously writes in *Black Reconstruction*, "I want to be fair, objective and judicial; to let no searing of the memory by intolerable insult and cruelty make me fail to sympathize with human frailties and contradiction, in the eternal paradox of good and evil."[330] It attests to the devoutness of his devotion to this calling that, even as he chronicles in heart-wrenching, almost unbearable detail the atrocities committed against Negroes in the South during the latter years of Reconstruction —"the South reached the extraordinary distinction of being the only modern civilized country where human beings were publicly burned alive"[331]—Du Bois still finds it in himself not to execrate beyond redemption Southern whites. Indeed, amidst his descriptions of wanton murder and mayhem inflicted on Negro innocents, Du Bois inserts, without trace of irony, a sentence that jars the reader as it practically leaps off the page:

> The white people of the South are essentially a fine kindly breed, the same sort of human beings that one finds the world over.[332]

What's more, far from hurling imprecations at the mostly poor whites who perpetrated these horrors, Du Bois manages to write with remarkable, even arresting, compassion, not to mention acuity, of the *human* depths from which sprang forth such barbaric passions:

> How is it that men who want certain things done by brute force can so often depend upon the mob? Total depravity, human hate and *Schadenfreude*, do not explain fully the mob spirit in America. Before the wide eyes of the mob is ever the Shape of Fear. Back of the writhing, yelling, cruel-eyed demons who break, destroy, maim and lynch and burn at the stake, is a knot, large or small, of normal human beings, and these human beings at heart are desperately afraid of something. Of what? Of many things, but usually of losing their jobs, being

> declassed, degraded, or actually disgraced; of losing their hopes, their savings, their plans for their children; of the actual pangs of hunger, of dirt, of crime. And of all this, most ubiquitous in modern industrial society is that fear of unemployment. It is its nucleus of ordinary men that continually gives the mob its initial and awful impetus. Around this nucleus, to be sure, gather snowball-wise all manner of flotsam, filth and human garbage, and every lewdness of alcohol and current fashion. But all this is the horrible covering of this inner nucleus of Fear.[333]

Whereas he unremarkably declares that after Emancipation "the plantation land should have gone to those who worked it," Du Bois then goes on, most surprisingly, to also declare that "the former owner should have been compensated in some part for a lost investment made with the social sanction of the nation," and, more surprisingly still, "to this, should have been added economic opportunity and access to the land for the poor whites."[334] Not a call to vengeance, not the scalding, lava-like outpourings of a wrathful God, but the soft, sober, somber cadence of a noble soul whose pride of race and indignation at the tragedy befallen his people has been tempered, quenched, by the faculty of Reason, the spirit of Justice and the impulse of Pity. In his final balance-sheet on the squandered opportunity of Reconstruction, Du Bois includes an extensive entry on the debit side, a threnody, of the losses suffered by Southern *white* society, the mental and cultural benightedness, the political corruption and economic backwardness, that overtook it, to its own enduring detriment.[335]

Further, even as Du Bois was the last person on God's earth to gainsay the toxicity of color prejudice, he also recognized it as a complex phenomenon, not amenable to simple definition, let alone facile sloganeering. Indeed, his massive intellectual output might be construed as renewed attempts, successive re-approximations, as he refined his understanding of racism so

as to get a firmer handle on it. As per any such "scientific" undertaking, Du Bois recognized that the worst enemy was the heavy hand of censorship. In the whole of his career as public intellectual and political crusader, Du Bois apparently only once, *once*, reached for the weapon of state censorship to fight racism—upon release of the seminal, incendiary cinematic spectacle *Birth of a Nation*, which directly caused, according to Du Bois, a precipitous increase in lynchings. Such a call for legal abridgment of speech was so alien to the whole of his being, that in his memoir Du Bois felt need to recall the unique and dire circumstances behind this aberrant demand of his.[336] Otherwise, Du Bois regarded full freedom of expression as the sine qua non of racial progress and its absence as a prime cause of regress. Thus, if the South failed to embark on a more enlightened course after the Civil War, it ultimately traced back to the suffocating conformity of Southern life:

> In the South there was absence of any leadership corresponding in breadth and courage to that of Abraham Lincoln. Here comes the penalty which a land pays when it stifles free speech and free discussion and turns itself over entirely to propaganda. It does not make any difference if at the time the things advocated are absolutely right, the nation, nevertheless, becomes morally emasculated and mentally hog-tied, and cannot evolve that healthy difference of opinion which leads to the discovery of truth under changing conditions.
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>
> Perhaps their [i.e., Southern whites'] early and fatal mistake was, when they refused long before the Civil War to allow in the South differences of opinion. They would not let honest white Southerners continue to talk against slavery. They drove out the non-conformist; they would not listen to the radical. The result was that there has been built up in the South an intolerance fatal to human culture. Men act as they do in the South, they murder, they lynch, they insult, because they listen to but one side of a question. They seldom know by real human contact Negroes who are men. They read books that laud the South and the "Lost Cause," but they are childish and furious when criticized, and interpret all criticism as personal attack. [337]

It bears pausing at these passages—in particular, Du Bois' dual caveat that even a true belief at a particular historical moment cannot justify censorship, for: *first*, truth is not given once and for all, frozen in time, but, on the contrary, unfolds and evolves over time; and, *second*, in order to keep pace with changing reality and enable an intellectual course correction, "healthy difference of opinion" is indispensable. It's not hard to surmise what Du Bois would make of an "antiracist" who would define once and for all in catechism style what is racism and what is antiracism; who would tag and gag everyone with whom he disagrees; who would claim a monopoly on truth even as he displays the most impoverished, distorted, juvenile grasp of it. It's also not hard to surmise what Du Bois would make of a cancel culture that elevates this mallet-wielding grifter, this preposterous poseur, to the post of intellectual arbiter.

How to be an antiracist

An antiracist is "one who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions." Kendi offers precious little insight, however, into what exactly comprises an "antiracist policy," or, put otherwise, what, as a practical matter, programmatically, positively, he supports. Instead, he expends a bucket's worth of verbiage on personal affectation—how to be a mediagenic antiracist—and even here he manages to go askew. He waxes indignant that an individual Black person should be charged with representing the whole of the Black race. It is said to be an onerous, unfair and, to boot, a racist burden:

> Making individuals responsible for the perceived behavior of racial groups and making whole racial groups responsible for the behavior of individuals are the two ways that behavioral racism infects our perception of the world.

True enough. But isn't it a commonplace that the onus of simultaneously representing oneself and one's group inheres in belonging to a minority, that it's the nature of the beast?[338] In his own person, Kendi boasts, he flouts this collective responsibility. To be an antiracist is, perforce, to disown it:

> Black individuals must … stop worrying about what other people may think about the way they act, the way they speak, the way they look, the way they dress, the way they are portrayed in the media, and the way they think and love and laugh;
>
> I am no longer policing my every action around an imagined White or Black judge;
>
> I represent only myself. If the judges draw conclusions about millions of Black people based on how I act, then they, not I, not Black people, have a problem…. To be antiracist is to let me be me.[339]

Were that the case, his would be an obnoxiously reckless attitude. When presenting oneself before a broad public, the paramount moral commandment is, no doubt, to stay true to oneself. Yet, it is an overweening egotism to ignore that, also, each meritorious act of an individual from a minority can open doors to those next in the queue while each unmeritorious act will slam the door shut; that each word or deed will, fairly or unfairly, cast dignity or indignity on one's group. "No people," Paul Robeson observed,

> feels more than we that what one Negro does affects the whole people. When I was playing football I had always to remember—whatever the provocation—that I represented a whole people. I had to play clean, and I did…. And in my classes I had to stay up late to prove that Negroes could also measure up in their studies. But every Negro boy and girl knows and accepts these obligations. We all know that we have a group responsibility.[340]

Everyone, except Kendi. The critical challenge is to find the right balance between personal integrity and group responsibility, not to carry on as if the universe is contained in one's navel. Even as he and his spouse were irrevocably estranged, and he was wholly unfaithful to her, Du Bois, according to his biographer, "saw marriage among

prominent African-Americans as an institution to be maintained, no matter what the emotional cost, in order to negate white stereotypes about the black family."[341] "It is a racial crime," Kendi portentously declares, "to be yourself if you are not White in America."[342] It perplexes, then, why Mr. "Let Me Be Me" isn't under arrest—or perhaps he's proof positive that crime does pay. In any event, his is almost certainly the bravura of an idle braggart. When he delivered his lecture at Harvard's Hutchins Center, was he wearing jeans slung so low as to expose the cleavage in his behind? Indeed, to judge by his get-ups, Kendi's a lot more *Gentlemen's Quarterly* than *Ghetto Chill*.

If Kendi eschews communal responsibility, that's also because persuasion by personal example doesn't work. An outstanding Black achiever can and always will be chalked up as the exception to the rule: "cast aside as unique and as different from ordinary inferior Black people." Even granting the kernel of truth in this, doesn't the extraordinary personality nonetheless chip away at, erode, racist prejudice? If individual attainment didn't redound on a group's worth, how did it come to pass that, according to Kendi's own history, the literary gifts of Phillis Wheatley abetted "the abolitionist cause in America" and "set off a social earthquake in London"; that his "gripping" slave narrative "garnered Douglass international prestige and forced thousands of readers to come to grips with the brutality of slavery and the human desire of Black people to be free"?[343] Douglass, who came to play a starring role in the great Abolitionist drama, invested the whole of his person in the persuasive power *of* his personhood. When he first began to publicly lecture, his eloquence caused whites to dismiss him as an imposter. When he proved his slave pedigree beyond doubt, slavery suffered a mighty, albeit not lethal, blow. It was the supposed inferiority of Blacks that, according to Douglass, ultimately rationalized slavery, and it was only by

practical, living example—firstly his own—that its illegitimacy could be exposed:

> Perhaps the greatest hindrance to the adoption of abolition principles by the people of the United States, was the low estimate, everywhere in that country, placed upon the negro, as a man; that because of his assumed natural inferiority, people reconciled themselves to his enslavement and oppression, as things inevitable, if not desirable. The grand thing to be done, therefore, was to change the estimation in which the colored people of the United States were held; to remove the prejudice which depreciated and depressed them; to prove them worthy of a higher consideration; to disprove their alleged inferiority, and demonstrate their capacity for a more exalted civilization than slavery and prejudice had assigned to them.

"The elevation," Douglass postulated, of a "few" talented colored men "to the high places of the nation would do more than cart-loads of noble resolutions asserting the equality of men, in breaking down the mean and hateful prejudice with which the colored race has been and continues to be assailed."[344] If racist ideology suffered a major setback during the Civil War, it was because the martial prowess demonstrated by Black troops, hitherto confined to rearguard deployments, upended demeaning stereotypes. "The raising of these two regiments—the 54th and 55th—and their splendid behavior," Douglass recalled,

> was the beginning of great things for the colored people of the whole country.... The 54th [regiment] was not long in the field before it proved itself gallant and strong, worthy to rank with the most courageous of its white companions in arms. Its assault upon Fort Wagner, in which it was so fearfully cut to pieces, and lost nearly half its officers, including its beloved and trusted commander, Col. Shaw, at once gave it a name and a fame throughout the country. In that terrible battle, under the wing of night, more cavils in respect of the quality of negro manhood were set at rest than could have been during a century of ordinary life and observation. After that assault we heard no more of sending negroes to garrison forts and arsenals, to fight miasma, yellow-fever, and small-pox. Talk of his ability to meet the foe in the open field, and of his equal fitness with the white man to stop a bullet, then began to prevail. From this time (and the fact ought to be remembered) the colored troops were called upon to occupy positions which required the courage, steadiness, and endurance of veterans, and even their enemies were obliged to admit that they proved themselves worthy the confidence reposed in them.[345]

To be sure, in order to comprehensively eradicate racist ideology, it would require not just token representation but, well beyond this, a robust redistribution of African-Americans across all spheres of human endeavor in which their inferiority is presumed, such that the racist stereotype could not withstand the juggernaut of overwhelming practical refutation. The human equality of Black people would then be incontrovertibly established by their proven capacity to compete on and across a level playing field. "If the time shall ever come," Douglass foretold, "when we shall possess in the colored people of the United States, a class of men noted for enterprise, industry, economy, and success, we shall no longer have any trouble in the matter of civil and political rights. The battle against popular prejudice will have been fought and won, and in common with all other races and colors, we shall have an equal chance in the race of life."[346] In any case, as against Douglass' historically grounded case for the exemplary act, validated by this phenomenon, this force of nature, himself, as he personally bore witness to its power, mesmerizing and galvanizing the nation, white and Black, from the most humble to Lincoln himself—indeed, Douglass, to this day, still leaves in thunderstruck awe the reader of his elocutions—in the face of all this, Kendi can offer only a dismissive sneer, a cheap putdown, as he dubs the likes of Wheatley and Douglass impotent "Black exhibits."[347]

Going off on a different tack, Kendi purports that endeavoring in one's own person to repudiate a racist stereotype is in effect to validate the stereotype and hence to be a purveyor of racist ideas:

> If Black people behaved admirably, abolitionists reasoned, they would be undermining justifications for slavery and proving that notions of their inferiority were wrong.… This strategy to undermine racist ideas was actually based on a racist idea: "negative" Black behavior, said that idea, was partially or totally responsible for the existence and persistence of racist ideas. To believe that the negative ways of Black people were responsible for racist ideas was to believe that there was some truth in notions of Black inferiority. To believe that there was some truth in notions of Black inferiority was to hold racist ideas.

Consider the logic of this reasoning. Paul Robeson sought out the role of *Othello* to, in his words, "prove the capacity of the people from whom I've sprung and of all such people, of whatever color, erroneously regarded as backward." Did Robeson therein concede the validity of racist ideas and was he himself a racist—or did his celebrated performance in a Shakespearean tragedy strike a blow against racism? Far from undercutting racism, when Black people break into previously inaccessible fields of human endeavor, it is further maintained, they in fact *engender* racism:

> Racist Americans have routinely despised those Black Americans the most who uplifted themselves, who defied those racist laws and theories that individuals employed to keep them down. So upwardly mobile Black folk have not persuaded away racist ideas or policies. Quite the contrary. Uplift suasion has brought on the progression of racism—new racist policies and ideas after Blacks broke through the old ones.[348]

The moral would then be, Black people should not seek attainments that defy "racist laws and theories." Here in the raw is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Kendi-world: *Black people who by personal example shatter racist stereotypes incense racists; These racists then implement new racist policies and ideas; Ergo, it is futile to breach racist barriers.* QED. Indeed, each breakthrough by a Black person is exploited by racists to buttress racism:

> With every Black first, the blame shifted to those Black people who failed to break away…. If some could break away, the logic went, then all could, if they worked hard enough…. And so, as much as Black firsts broke racial barriers, the publicity around Black firsts sometimes, if not most times, reinforced racist ideas blaming Blacks and not the remaining discriminatory barriers.[349]

This contention contains, of course, a kernel of truth.[350] When he was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Robeson was taunted that his athletic achievements proved "there was no prejudice" against Black people. "Just a moment," Robeson rejoined. "This is something that I challenge very deeply, and very

sincerely: that the success of a few Negroes, including myself or Jackie Robinson, can make up … for seven hundred dollars a year for thousands of Negro families in the South." But even as Kendi's point is taken, what's the takeaway: that Black people shouldn't strive to break the color line; that the U.S. would have been a more equitable place if a Du Bois and Robeson, Jackie Robinson, Arthur Ashe, Tiger Woods, and Serena Williams hadn't come along? Moreover, ponder this. Kendi is a fervent advocate of affirmative action. Still, even as it has opened doors to Blacks, there's the downside that—as the Supreme Court observed in *Bakke*—"preferential programs may only reinforce common stereotypes holding that certain groups are unable to achieve success without special protection based on a factor having no relationship to individual worth."[351] Shouldn't Kendi then oppose affirmative action as it also reinforces racist stereotypes? Hard as it might be to believe, Kendi even deplores the new opportunities that breaching the color line opened up. He reckons the mass entry of Black athletes into professional sports a "progression of racism":

> For decades thereafter, Black baseball, football, and basketball professionals were routinely steered into positions that took advantage of their so-called natural animal-like speed and strength.[352]

Black people lack any agency, as he sees things, they're forever victims, "routinely steered" into sports. It couldn't possibly be that Black athletes have, of their own volition, from love of the sport, coveted and, from endowed gift and perspirational self-discipline, managed to occupy these positions. Strangely, Kendi himself aspired, unsuccessfully, to be an N.B.A. player, and he still aspires to "witnessing my beloved New York Knicks finally win an N.B.A. championship."[353] But why would this supremo antiracist willingly participate in his own racist exploitation and degradation or cheer on the racist exploitation and degradation of other Black people? In any case, Kendi's bottom line is, it was racist to exclude Black athletes and

it was racist to include them. Kendi-world is a closed racist circle: every victory over racism is just a prelude to another defeat by it. It perplexes why he is providing counsel on "how to be an antiracist" if it's manifestly impossible to be an antiracist: like a hydra, each time one racist head is lopped off, two others, yet more hideous, immediately take its place.

If Kendi affects—at any rate, verbally—so much personal bravado and indifference to public opinion, it perhaps ultimately traces back to his odd-in-the-extreme conception of politics. He carries on as if he's uncovered a secret unbeknownst to humankind before he, Ibram X. Kendi, strode the planet: that political change occurs not by changing public opinion but, instead, by changing state policy; that changing people's minds comes after not before this policy change; and that Black people can consequently acquit themselves however they please for, be they saints or sinners, it's of no account as public opinion itself is beside the point. But, unless Kendi, alongside his beloved Black Panthers, plans on staging a putsch, how is state policy to be radically recast except by first rousing public opinion? He proclaims the need to "pass sweeping legislation completely overhauling the enslaving justice system," to "find alternatives to prisons," and to "empower[] local residents to hire and fire the officers policing their communities."[354] But absent mass popular pressure, aren't these just items on Santa's Wish List? "Moral and educational suasion breathes the assumption that racist minds must be changed before racist policy," Kendi pontificates,

> ignoring history that says otherwise. Look at the soaring White support for desegregated schools and neighborhoods decades *after* the policies changed in the 1950s and 1960s. (emphasis in original)[355]

But as late as 1960, fewer than one Black child in a thousand was attending an integrated school in the South. This author of the "definitive history of racist ideas" appears blissfully unaware that,

although the 1954 *Brown* decision declared segregated schools unconstitutional, their actual integration had to await a moral awakening from the ground up: "The pace of school desegregation accelerated primarily because of the civil rights movement"; "Within a few years [of *Brown*], it had become clear that litigation without a social movement to support it could not produce significant social change"; "Congress and the president did little to back *Brown* until the civil rights movement transformed national opinion on race.... Congress and the president ultimately got behind *Brown*, not because of *Brown*, but because the civil rights movement had altered public opinion on school segregation."[356] In other words, substantive change in school policy was preceded by changed minds as whites in the North came to embrace federal intervention. It's true that glacial hostility to integration in the American South thawed only after enactment of federal civil rights legislation. However, it's no less true that this legislation couldn't possibly have mustered enough votes in Congress if, decisively, mass Black nonviolent resistance—as tenacious as it was dignified (down to the protesters' formal attire)—hadn't mobilized public opinion in the North, at the federal level, and worldwide. Kendi, however, purports otherwise. If the national government forcibly desegregated the South, it was because pervasive and palpable American racism hampered Washington's efforts during the Cold War to woo newly independent Third World countries away from the Soviet Union: "Racist power started civil-rights legislation out of self-interest."[357] The Civil Rights Movement, in Kendi's curious historical ledger, was a null or at most an incidental factor. But is this true? To begin with, if racism undercut U.S. diplomatic démarches in the 1960s, it was because of the images flashed abroad of heroic nonviolent protests defying brutal repression. Further, it traduces the historical record—etched in sacrifice unto death—to deny that the Civil Rights Movement was the prime mover in extirpating the deeply entrenched

Jim Crow system.[358] If left to its own devices, the national government wouldn't have risen to a historic challenge of such magnitude. What's more, on Kendi's premise that minds change only after policies change, the Civil Rights Movement couldn't have won over white support for its legislative program; white support for Black equality could only have come after the civil rights legislation was enacted. If, however, the struggle had been reduced to a tit-for-tat, whites versus Blacks, reciprocal amassing of raw power—the plot line preferred by Kendi[359]—if white Americans hadn't entered the fray in behalf of civil rights, would Blacks have come out on top? If the struggle had stayed confined to the South, hidden from the public eye (national media attention also depended, crucially, on *white* support), wouldn't Black protests have been summarily crushed? Nonviolent Black protest triggered violent segregationist resistance; which then aroused sympathetic white public opinion outside the South; which in turn compelled the federal government to stay the hand of local white armed power: that was the essential sequence, trajectory, and dynamic that averted a bloody defeat.[360] To imagine the Civil Rights Movement as a bare-boned, hard-knuckled macho Power versus Power stand-off in which Blacks emerge triumphant might titillate Black Panther wannabes, but it's utterly divorced from reality. Even if the Black minority were armed, as Martin Luther King pointedly observed, it almost certainly couldn't have succeeded on its own:

> Few, if any, violent revolutions have been successful unless the violent minority had the sympathy and support of the non-resisting majority. Castro may have had only a few Cubans actually fighting with him and up in the hills, but he would have never overthrown the Batista regime unless he had had the sympathy of the vast majority of Cuban people. It is perfectly clear that a violent revolution on the part of American blacks would find no sympathy and support from the white population and very little from the majority of the Negroes themselves.[361]

If African-Americans managed to amass enough power to prevail, it's because they were able to win the battle for public opinion *by educating*

and persuading, by shaming and embarrassing, by cajoling and confronting in the national and global arenas. If the story of the Civil Rights Movement had just been about autonomous Black Power, then Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 at the March on Washington, and Fannie Lou Hamer's "I Question America" speech in 1964 before the Democratic Party convention—which, transmitted across the Nation, electrified and galvanized it, proving to be inflection points in that story—would have to be written out; in itself, that's neither here nor there, except that so, too, would vanish the historic legislative agenda symbolized and signaled by these speeches, grounded as they were in and giving voice to the politically decisive element of mass Black mobilization swelled by broad (if uneven) white sympathy. This political-cum-statutory achievement in turn hinged on both the self-abnegating nobility of Black people's resistance and the indefeasible justice of their cause. "I have consistently preached," King wrote, "that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek."[362] Kendi is doubly wrong: before policy changed, minds had to be changed, while the changing of minds depended on how Black people individually and en masse acquitted themselves on the public stage.[363] What's yet more galling, in hip Kendi-world, nonviolence is condescendingly reckoned a naïve tactic: "these students were expecting their noble campaigns of nonviolent resistance to touch the moral conscience of White Americans." According to him, the cardinal lesson of that era was, on the contrary, that "persuasion does not work." He credits the 1960s War on Poverty, not to mass grassroots Black agitation, but—it takes one's breath away!—to the autonomous initiative of a white intellectual:

> [Michael] Harrington tossed a war on poverty onto the Democrats' agenda.

He depicts the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act as either dropping onto history's stage out of the clear blue sky or designed to placate public opinion in the Third World.[364] Again, the Civil Rights Movement, according to Kendi's bookkeeping, didn't accomplish diddly-squat. The uprooting of Jim Crow was wholly the work of white people oblivious to, insulated from, and untouched by the mass protests. Were this not travesty enough, Kendi bills this myopic racist caricature as antiracist history. In the real world, it was the Civil Rights Movement that forced historic change on the country. "In the decade following the *Brown* decision," a recent study observes, "two opposing movements shared center stage in a battle for hearts and minds: Massive [white] Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement. These two forces opposed each other from the time of the *Brown* decision in 1954 until civil rights forces won passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965."[365]

Finally, Kendi alleges that, at the end of his life, Martin Luther King experienced an epiphany as he disowned the tactics hitherto championed by him:

> King no longer saw any real strategic utility for the persuasion techniques that assimilationists adored.… King therefore switched gears and began planning … to bring poor people to the nation's capital in order to force the federal government to pass an "economic bill of rights"…, a bill that sounded eerily similar to the economic proposals on the Black Panther Party's ten point platform.… The road to lasting progress was civil disobedience, not persuasion, King maintained.[366]

It's certain that King did eventually come to focus on material inequality, especially after 1965 when he entered the civil rights fray in Chicago, and that he appreciated new alliances would have to be forged as this new redistributive phase of the struggle would alienate some erstwhile white *and Black* supporters. "With Selma and the voting rights bill," King observed in retrospect, "one era of our struggle came to a close and a new era came into being. Now our struggle is for genuine equality, which means economic equality."[367] But it's a figment

of Kendi's testosterone-charged imagination that King repudiated nonviolent resistance;[368] that he was following in the footsteps of a path blazed by the Panthers; and—this takes the biscuit!—that he only embraced "civil disobedience" shortly before his assassination. It mortifies but the question must be squarely faced: *Can this "definitive" historian be ignorant of the mass sit-ins and mass arrests that set in motion and propelled forward the Civil Rights Movement?* Further, civil disobedience did not stand in opposition to persuasion but rather in a relationship of means to ends. Nonviolent protest was both a moral choice—not to sully the sublimity and unimpeachability of the cause—as well as a pragmatic one, a finely calibrated reconciling of opposites, i.e., of coercion and nonviolence. Its goal was to foment sufficient coercive disruption in public life so as to *force* a national reckoning with racial injustice. To expose the true, ugly face of the "Southern way of life," nonviolent protesters paradoxically courted and counted on *violent* segregationist resistance.[369] If the ultimate goal was to persuade, however, then resort to physical violence by Blacks themselves couldn't but be counterproductive: it would alienate whites outside the South who needed to be won over; it would hand Southern whites a convenient pretext to divert and distract attention from the racial injustice; it would hand the most rabid white segregationists an alibi to unleash massive, lethal counter-violence.[370] If Kendi had read King's 1963 *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, directed at white moderates chafing at his tactics, with as much care as he did the Panther ten point platform, he wouldn't have been so embarrassingly ignorant of the dialectic between civil disobedience and persuasion as to counterpose them. Herewith a few relevant excerpts from King's epistle:

> We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community.
>
> …

> You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.
> …
> [W]e see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.
> …
> I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.
> …
> We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

Before he patronizingly dismissed the foot-soldiers of this movement, Kendi should perhaps have also pondered King's epistolary peroration. If he has any shame, Kendi would be hanging his head in it:

> You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence."… I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Meredithes, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest." They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience' sake.

In sum, Kendi's "definitive history" reverses cause and effect: changed minds preceded changed policy. When he is not downright denigrating and denying, negating and nullifying, the changes it wrought, Kendi derogates the Civil Rights Movement to at most an incident in the historic process, whereas in reality it triggered and buoyed along this extraordinary chapter in American history, one which yielded not sham militant photo-ops à la Kendi's Panthers, but a concrete, substantive, palpable political transformation. Apropos of which, King pointedly commented:

> Occasionally, Negroes contend that the 1965 Watts riot and the other riots in various cities represented effective civil rights action. But those who express this view always end up with stumbling words when asked what concrete gains have been won as a result. At best, the riots have produced a little additional anti-poverty money allotted by frightened government officials and a few water sprinklers to cool the children of the ghettos. It is something like improving the food in the prison while the people remain securely incarcerated behind bars. Nowhere have the riots won any concrete improvement such as have the organized protest demonstrations.

"The Movement" that Kendi is at such great pains to belittle ultimately honored and bestowed glory on not only each and all of its protagonists, but also the human race writ large, as these despoiled and despised, these wretched of the earth, these so-called "ordinary" folk bore personal witness to and revealed—in their conscious, deliberate pursuit, come what may, the devil be damned, of what rightfully was theirs—the grace of human possibility and the irrepressible striving for human dignity at its core.[371]

"What if no group in history," Kendi asks rhetorically, "has gained their freedom through appealing to the moral conscience of their oppressors?" "Power," he preaches, "will never self-sacrifice away from its self-interest."[372] Fair enough, although Douglass' original—"Power never concedes anything without a demand; it never has and it never will."—is rather more lyrical. But are appeals to conscience, per Kendi's hard-nosed nostrums, irrelevant in politics? A racial minority

cannot soberly aspire to political power and substantive change except in a broad coalition, one that is anchored in a subtle blend of material interest *and* moral sympathy—in a word, in mutual *solidarity*. Yes, class struggle is about aggrandizing material interest, but it ought also to be remembered that in the annals of that struggle, many a worker has consciously and willingly delivered over his or her life—the ultimate material interest—to The Cause. In his political testament, *Here I Stand*, Paul Robeson affirmed his belief in "the principles of scientific socialism." Still, he would thrill callused communists and weather-beaten workers packed in concert halls and bleachers as he sang

> *Every time I feel the spirit,*
> *Moving in my heart,*
> *I do pray.*

Anyone who has attended a demonstration in a cause embracing more than the circumference of their navel can attest to that—dare it be said?—mystical feeling, spiritual high, of collective resolve. In the matter at hand, racism is real, its invidious effects are real; the plight of African-Americans does not reduce to class oppression. To forge an unshakeable bond between Blacks and whites able to withstand inevitable provocation and machination (*divide et impera*: that's how ruling classes rule), it must spring not only from mutual material interest—although that is and must be the bedrock—but, also and not incidentally, of a genuine *moral* recognition by whites of the special burdens deposited by history on the backs of Black people and, concomitantly, of the special dispensations—compensatory, supplemental, remedial—that need be afforded Black people if this legacy is ever to be overcome. A massive redistribution of wealth from, say, the top 50 percent to the bottom 50 percent would, if evenly meted out, still consign Blacks en masse squarely at the bottom of the heap, albeit on a higher floor. The predicate of an equitable redistribution must be its unequal redistribution, everyone benefitting,

but those on the lowest rungs benefitting more than others. That was the tacit bargain and promise of the Bernie Sanders campaign: every have-not would benefit from its platform—Medicare for All, abolition of student debt, tuition-free higher education, massive investment in public infrastructure and jobs, the Green New Deal—but Black people would be the *disproportionate* beneficiaries as they and their communities were the most needy.[373] A broad coalition blind to racial inequity will inevitably splinter as Blacks recoil at still being ultimately short-changed, still stuck at the bottom. It's incumbent upon whites to make the moral leap—born not of psychic guilt à la Ta-Nehisi Coates but, instead, of the simple, indisputable, factual datum that, historically, the cards have been stacked against Black people; to let their better angels guide their worse ones; to not balk at a special dispensation that, on a cramped calculus of material interest, penalizes them as it privileges Blacks. That white people can rise to the occasion was tentatively on display as George Floyd's murder brought swarms of white youth into the streets in visceral disgust at the racist atrocity and, simultaneously, white and Black outrage melded into common indignation at an inhuman system that, color-blind in its rapacity, ruthlessly exploited all of them. The weeks of demonstrations bespoke a white-Black solidarity grounded in common interest but also cognizant of the special burdens borne by Black people. Indeed, in a paradox exemplary of the serendipity of politics, it was spirit that blazed the path to matter: only after whites joined with Blacks to protest this racism did their mutual class interest, hitherto latent and submerged, become manifest.

When he's not outright denouncing, Kendi sniffs at "moral and educational suasion [that] focus on persuading White people, on appealing to their moral conscience through horror and their logical mind through education." At root and in toto, he professes, racism springs from the antagonistic class interests of white exploiters and

Black exploited. Whites can't be implored to cast aside a racist system if they materially benefit from it:

> educational persuasion … ha[s] been predicated on the false construction of the race problem: the idea that ignorance and hate lead to racist ideas, which lead to racist policies. In fact, self-interest leads to racist policies, which lead to racist ideas leading to all the ignorance and hate.[374]

But were this true, it's the mystery's mystery why—apart from hefty honorariums—Kendi lectures before white audiences on the "history of racist ideas in America" and "how to be an antiracist." His political objective, he says, is to "disseminate and educate about the uncovered racist policy and antiracist policy correctives."[375] On his premises, however, he can't very well expect to convert them: didn't he assert that the material interests of these white attendees make them impervious to "moral and educational suasion"? "Knowledge is only power if knowledge is put to the struggle for power," Ibram X. postures:

> Changing minds is not a movement. Critiquing racism is not activism. Changing minds is not activism. An activist produces power and policy change, not mental change. If a person has no record of power or policy change, then that person is not an activist.[376]

Then why, for God's sake, is he lecturing at Harvard? His knowledge (as it were) cannot even alter their thinking, let alone engage them in the struggle for Black power and economic justice. By his own logic, he's not being—it also so happens he never was—an "activist"; he's just a blowhard.[377] At a couple of junctures and if only in passing, Kendi does posit that, in their majority, Black and white people have alike been victimized, and alike would stand to gain, by scrapping an economic system rigged by the white superrich ("racist power"), and that white ruling elites propagate racism in order to sow artificial division between white and Black workers. But this acknowledgment isn't just fleeting; it also can't be reconciled with his preferred

professional venues. His white audiences, groupies, sponsors and benefactors seem to comprise a lot more of the ritzy one percent than the threadbare 99 percent. What is *their* interest in converting to antiracism? Further to the point, Kendi's only real policy prescription targets the racial disparity in income/wealth distribution—i.e., the greater representation of whites than Blacks in the higher brackets—and homes in on affirmative action as the cure-all.[378] However, Blacks and whites *qua groups* do not share a material interest in eliminating such disparity; whites have no dog in that race; indeed, when it comes to affirmative action, they—or, at any rate, white males—incontrovertibly lose out. It's quite possible that white have-nots would come to support a massive *redistribution* of wealth that is partially unequal, i.e., one in which all the have-nots significantly benefit, even as Blacks benefit more; it's impossible, however, that white have-nots will pour into the streets solely in order to equalize racial income/wealth disparity. Stated otherwise, if Kendi's practical proposal to eradicate racial disparities is to be implemented, it must hinge not on galvanizing a broad material coalition of white and Black have-nots but, ironically, on pricking the white "moral conscience" that he derides; indeed, irony of ironies, on pricking the conscience of white "racist power." On what other basis can he hope to eliminate racial disparity? Alone and isolated, left to their own devices, Black people can't pull it off; without something in it for them, white have-nots won't rally behind such a demand. As it happens, the white one percent might actually be amenable to such a plea to end racial disparities. Not, however, in order to fight racism but, on the contrary, because, above and beyond salving their tender woke consciences, acquiescing in Kendi's key demand on "white power" would leave the essential system intact. A racially integrated one percent would appear to be a rather small price to pay if it facilitates and stabilizes the rapacious exploitation of the 99 percent.[379] If Kendi is currently feted

in charmed circles, it's because, for all his fire and brimstone rhetoric, his hip and hyped public persona, his militant preening and macho posturing, the only substantial demand he makes on the one percent —*reconfigure the exploiting class to include a fair percentage of us*—they're already prepared to concede.

* * *

Ibram X. Kendi is neither scholar nor activist. His "definitive history of racist ideas in America" reduces to a compendium of prepubescent binary name-calling. His guide to being an "antiracist" is an incoherent mishmash of woke pieties. The reality is, Kendi is the guru of a cult. The cult has its initiation rites and rituals. In public, for example, this cult requires each initiate to recite and post their pronouns. In its inner sanctums, the unburdening is more intimate. Here's a peek behind the curtain at a session. Kendi the sinner recalls his pilgrimage to wokeness:

> My journey to being an antiracist first recognized the intersectionality of my ethnic racism, and then my bodily racism, and then my cultural racism, and then my color racism, and then my class racism, and, when I entered graduate school, my gender racism and queer racism.[380]

Although the struggle to purge oneself of racism is an eternal work-in-progress, Kendi's has clearly scaled the exhilarating peaks of self-awareness:

> I am a cisgendered Black heterosexual male—"cisgender" meaning my gender identity corresponds to my birth sex, in contrast to transgender people, whose gender identity does not correspond to their birth sex. To be queer antiracist is to understand the privileges of my cisgender, of my masculinity, of my heterosexuality, of their intersections. To be queer antiracist is to serve as an ally to transgender people, to intersex people, to women, to the non-gender-conforming, to homosexuals, to their intersections, meaning listening, learning, and being led by their equalizing ideas, by their equalizing policy campaigns, by their power struggle for equal opportunity.[381]

The cult has its own epistemology. Here's Kendi recalling his moment of epiphany in graduate school when the objectivity/subjectivity conundrum was solved:

> In my first course with Mazama, she lectured on [Molefi] Asante's contention that objectivity was really "collective subjectivity." She concluded, "It is impossible to be objective." It was the sort of simple idea that shifted my view of the world immediately. It made so much sense to me as I recalled the subjective choices I'd made as an aspiring journalist and scholar. If objectivity was dead, though, I needed a replacement. I flung up my hand like an eighth-grader. "Yes?" "If we can't be objective, then what should we strive to do?" She stared at me as she gathered her words. Not a woman of many words, it did not take long. "Just tell the truth. That's what we should strive to do. Tell the truth."[382]

Move over Kant. The initiates sitting cross-legged nod their heads in collective wonderment. It's so simple! *Objectivity doesn't exist; everything is subjective; just tell the truth.* Why didn't *we* see that? Then again, isn't it the mark of genius that it pierces the complex to the simple? But then, Cis-gender White Male, slunk in a shadowy corner, sheepishly raises his hand.

> What's the difference, O Wise One, between objectivity and telling the truth?

A disgruntled murmur sweeps the chamber. The ignorance! The effrontery! "Be patient, my son/daughter/intersexual progeny," Kendi, unfazed, gently replies.

> Your vision is still clouded by your cis-gender white male assimilationist racism; biological racism; ethnic racism; bodily racism; cultural racism; behavioral racism; color racism; anti-white racism; black racism; class racism; space racism; gender racism; queer racism; racism racism. You see, the road to wokeness is long and rocky. But it's worth it. Look at me now! I am a National Book Award winner, and *New York Times* bestseller, and a MacArthur "Genius" grant winner. I'm feted at Harvard and the Hamptons. I am the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities and the Founding Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research. I get paid a cool half million dollars annually just for directing the Center. I can charge $207.00 *per minute* when I guest lecture.[383]

"But ain't that because you got them long dreads and crowbarred an X into your name?" Cis-gender, in a state of resilient, if desolate, desperation, boldly retorts.

> You know how stupid white liberals eat up that *Kunta Kinte* shtick. Barack Obama wouldn't have gotten past first base if he hadn't, in the greatest career move in recorded history, changed his Christian name. What self-respecting white Hamptons hipster wants to hang with a *Barry*? That's why Cory Booker—jeez, what a poor excuse for a name! and, for crissakes, he's bald!—never stood a snowball's chance in Hell. And I'll tell you another thing, you're just a gasbag gaslighting us. Those videos of you with crammed bookshelves in the background, those designer faux-horn-rimmed glasses, they don't fool anyone. You read Du Bois like I read Maimonides. And you talk all this militant sounding shit, but at the end of the day, you ain't demanding the one percent share the goodies on their table with the rest of us. You're not shaking up the table. You're not even demanding they grow the table. You're just wanting that the one percent incorporate a sprinkling of the likes of you. You don't worry let alone scare them. *You're just a fashion plate and an insurance policy.* That's why Dorsey threw your way a cool $10 million. Now he can hide behind the down-with-the-hood Ibram X. Kendi brand as he goes his merry way raking in a fortune while the rest of us are raking in misfortune.

The crowd is up on its feet thronging around him, fists rhythmically thrust in the air, chanting, *Off the Cis-gender! Off the Cis-gender!* But Kendi himself has discreetly exited the room. He's headed for a business meeting with Netflix to plan its *How to Be an Antiracist* blockbuster trilogy,[384] followed by a soiree at Jeff Bezos' crib, to launch his new book, *How to Fight Racism while Snorkeling in Maui, Skiing in Aspen, Sailing in Hyannis, and Screwing Your Warehouse Workers.*

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Chapter 6

Barack Obama's "Neat Trick"

Nobody, as aforesaid, knew what he had done; but everybody knew him to be the greatest that had appeared.

—Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*

The Social Revolutionary Party had ceased by that time to be a party, and become a grandiose zero. In Kerensky this party found an adequate leader.

—Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

Barack Obama is the perfected and perfect instrument of identity politics, its summa summarum. He represents the cynical triumph of form over substance, color over character. He is the cool Black dude who is also the reliable—in Professor Cornel West's words—"mascot of Wall Street." A Black man who grew up white, and therefore knows white people inside out and upside down, Obama is a virtuoso at pressing just the right buttons to make white people feel good about themselves by feeling good about him.[385] If he never overtly plays the race card, that's because he doesn't have to, and on balance he's better off not playing it: for whites brandishing their wokeness and, for that matter, African-Americans, the fact that he's Black is *automatically* a plus, while for ordinary whites aligning with their better angels, if he leans in on his blackness, it can backfire into a minus.[386] He's utterly unthreatening, with a winning smile, the kind of guy an Ivy League graduate, male or female, would proudly bring home for dinner, and

His eyes were friendly, his smile was friendly—oh, he was always friendly enough; he was merely astonished when he found that you did not understand his importance and did not want to hand over anything he might desire.

** The italicized quotes are from Elmer Gantry, the eponymous evangelical mountebank in Sinclair Lewis' celebrated novel.*

whom Spencer and Kate[387] would come to just *adore*. But he's also the cool cat whose head bobs in understated, syncopated beat as Aretha sings "Natural Woman."[388] At the premier haven of phony white liberals, Harvard Law School, Obama's classmates couldn't get enough of how "very cool," "super-cool," "incredibly cool" this ex-"community organizer" was, geared up in his worn leather bomber jacket, cigarette transgressively dangling from his lips, and, oh!, the "swagger." (Throughout his political career, Obama has milked every last drop from the teat of this "community organizer" persona.)[389] The Harvard chapter proved pivotal in his life, for it was there that Obama fabricated and finely calibrated the persona that would launch his career.

> *The Elmer Gantry who had for years pretended that he relished defying the whole college had for those same years desired popularity. He had it now—popularity, almost love, almost reverence, and he felt overpoweringly his role as leading man.*
> *...*
> *He never said anything important, and he always said it sonorously. He could make "Good morning" seem profound as Kant, welcoming as a brass band, and uplifting as a cathedral organ.*

So confident is the Democratic Party that Obama will come through when he's needed, it has anointed him, cultivating a veritable cult of Obama. Even as there's no discernibly exceptional intelligence or talent at play, Obama can do no wrong, he can speak no wrong; to doubt, if only for a fleeting moment, his divine perfection immediately brands the skeptic a diehard racist. Consider his signature calling: "the greatest political speaker of his generation"; "when the audience was with him, POTUS found a gear no other speaker could match."[390] His vaunted oratorical gifts reduce, however, to a quartet of studied techniques: head tilted upwards (as if posing for Mount Rushmore); lips pursed (as if a petulant school principal, his demeanor one of virtuous disdain, reprimanding truants); head slowly rotating 180 degrees as he pans the audience (*Don't forget the eye contact, Barack!*); and the obligatory pregnant 30-second pause after

each sentence (as if allowing time for the gravity of his insipid remarks to sink in). Except on the basketball court, none of Obama's physicality is organic, of home growth; his body language is not that of a native speaker. It's always and ever a put-on, a pose. If not the delivery, then maybe it's the content of Obama's speeches that distinguish his oratory. The locution "Obama's speeches," however, is something of a misnomer. The occasional exception aside, he didn't write "his" speeches.[391] The Obama White House assembled a stable of eight writers. All, incidentally, were white. The forte of several hires was the comic sketch and one-liner; it would appear that not a single Black comedy writer throughout these United States was up to snuff.[392] Be that as it may, apart from the rudimentary outline he might dictate and his edits to successive drafts, what Obama read from a teleprompter was the handiwork of his staff. His predecessors probably followed the same protocol but the difference is, none of them built a public reputation on soaring, profound rhetoric not witnessed since Marcus Aurelius. The media hype versus the humdrum reality of "Obama's speeches" is captured in this awkwardly juxtaposed reminiscence by one of his writers:

> If you're looking for a near-perfect Obama speech, one that should be canon but isn't quite, I recommend the remarks he delivered on April 18, 2013 [after the Boston Marathon attack].... His speech that day, written by Terry [another staff writer] on impossibly short notice, had to be flawless, and it was.... An extraordinary blend of toughness and tenderness, it's the kind of thing that earned POTUS the moniker "consoler in chief."

To appreciate the clinical derangement (or debasement) of mind induced by the Obama cult, imagine if this same, perfectly intelligent, writer had said:

> *He warmed to the splendor of his own voice. He saw the audience ... as a radiant cloud, and he began to boom confidently, he began to add to his outline impressive ideas which were altogether his own —except, perhaps, as he had heard them thirty or forty times in sermons.*
> ...
> *He had, in Public Speaking, never been a*

failure nor ever for one second interesting.

If you're looking for a near-perfect Shakespeare play, I recommend *King Lear*. This play was written by Christopher Marlowe. It's the kind of thing that earned Shakespeare the moniker "greatest English playwright."[393]

All of them listening to the Rev. Dr. Elmer Gantry as he shouted: "—and I want to tell you that the fellow who is eaten by ambition is putting the glories of this world before the glories of Heaven! Oh, if I could only help you to understand that it is humility, that it is simple loving kindness, that it is tender loyalty, which alone make the heart glad!"

On the other hand, Obama did state in his presidential memoir that these speeches by his staff perfectly captured his personal voice and political vision;[394] in *that* sense, it's appropriate to denote them "his" speeches. What did they consist of? A parsing of Obama's public addresses reveals a relentless concatenation of the most vapid, sententious, shopworn, fatuous, hollow, saccharine clichés—a cornucopia of the commonplace—without a single clever phrase, metaphor or aperçu to redeem or relieve them, interlarded with oleaginous homilies to humility before God. (How does he humble himself before Him if he acquits himself, and expects others to defer, as if he *is* Him?) What is more, rare is the speech by Obama that isn't punctuated by the lethal drone of Reaganesque canned, cornball patriotic hokum.[395] It's not as if he actually is a patriot in the ordinary or, for that matter, any sense. Rather, not for the first time, Obama reinvented himself to augment the drama of his personal odyssey. He discovered along his calculated journey of self-revelation to the presidency not only his piety and pigmentation (more on which presently), but also his patriotism. If his life story could be burnished by it representing something bigger than himself—the telos of *America's* drama—then Obama had to feign belief in that something bigger. So the Hawaiian beach-bum son of an anti-colonial Kenyan father and an AWOL mother with a thing for exotic "brown bums," after passing through a quaint "GQ Marxist" phase while in college, then transmogrified, upon entering public life, into a flag-waving Son of the American Revolution.[396] If, from his

national debut at the 2004 Democratic convention, Obama rhapsodized in speech after speech after speech about the "greatness" of the "American story," it was not because Obama was a student of U.S. history, let alone enthralled by it, but something altogether different—because he conceived himself to be its climax, its culmination: he *was* the American story. Typically, one of the last speeches of his presidency (at the U.N.) began by invoking "America's story," and ended by marveling that it made "possible for someone like me to be elected president of the United States."[397] Even as he self-effacingly reminisces in his memoir that his presidential campaign "was no longer about me, … I had become a mere conduit" for other forgotten, little people, what clearly tickled Obama was that *he* was the "conduit." Not just at the end, but also in the beginning and middle, of the day, it's always been about himself. But that's only the half of it.

But his monthly orations had not been too arduous; no one had grieved if he stole all his ideas and most of his phrasing from the encyclopedia.… He had learned nothing except the placing of his voice.

His confected patriotism did not just feed Obama's ego and fuel his candidacy, it also provided an autonomous, self-sufficient raison d'être for his presidential bid. He had been chosen by Destiny to realize the promise latent in America's becoming. Indeed, that objective filled the void at the core of Obama's politics. If it could be said of him that he possessed a "genius," it was that he finessed turning his very personhood into a national referendum. The presidential election wasn't a political event. It was a morality tale, a psycho-drama, a passion play; it wasn't beyond but of the essence of good and evil; not the candidate's, but *our* good and evil, how to exorcise the evil so as to distill the good. To cast a vote for Obama was proof of one's own and, collectively, of America's redemptive power. It was solipsism-cum-white-guilt-tripping on a truly cosmic scale. By recasting himself as the revealed protagonist of the American drama, Obama managed to flip his outsider status,

ordinarily a liability—a Black man whose middle name was *Hussein*—into an asset, as his identitarian attributes became the touchstone of just how inclusive a nation we were. The more alien his being was, the better we as a people were for embracing it. If he won, it wasn't despite but, on the contrary, *because* he was Black; or, to put a fine point on it, he won both despite and because he was Black. He wasn't, then, a post-racial president, judged not by the "color of his skin, but the content of his character." What's more, he didn't exemplify the promise latent in the American creed; like many of his predecessors, he had reached the summit of elected office notwithstanding his mediocrity. Truth be told, if ever there were a modern-day tribute to the Land of Opportunity, it was not Barack Obama but, rather, Bill Clinton, who, although of stereotypically "white trash" stock, managed to ascend the ladder of success by dint of his exceptional natural endowments as honed by his prodigious will, discipline, and energy. It is a wonderful rebuke to snooty wokeness that this "cracker" from Hope, Arkansas, alongside his fellow "cracker" from Plains, Georgia, Jimmy Carter, stand in the front ranks, not least in sheer brainpower, among recent U.S. presidents. Be that as it may, what exactly did Obama stand for? Why cast your vote for him? He *was* what he stood for. "He was the message and the messenger all at once."[398] His campaign slogan, *Yes We Can*, prompted the question, Yes we can *what*? His answer wasn't long in coming. Yes we can *elect me*. End of story. Obama was the reductio ad absurdum of identity politics: a deliberately blank Black slate; the blanker, the better; even a stray mark at the edges might cost him votes. He didn't need promise anything more before or produce anything more after getting elected. He just needed be himself: *President Obama* was his unique gift and offering; the juxtaposition of honorific and patronymic a validation of all that was great and good about America.[399] To boot, the fact that Obama was Black made for a snug melding with his other campaign

slogan. If nothing else and if only at its crudest, a Black man in the White House constituted *Change We Can Believe In*: he *was* Black, and no Black person had ever been President. QED. He was, as his hack campaign strategist, David Axelrod, put it, "a living symbol of that hope and change."[400] Winning the election would, in and of itself, vindicate Obama's pledge of change.

If this sounds like a scam and swindle, that's because it was. Axelrod, whose stock-in-trade was campaign "messaging," had recycled the "hope and change" script for years; he was peddling rancid goods, hawking stale pabulum. This time, however, he stumbled upon the perfect medium. By placing his person at the center of the campaign—if America elected a Black man, then there was hope for America; the election of a Black man would signal change on an epochal scale—Obama convinced himself and, with a little help from his Team Obama handlers, alas, an awful lot of others, that his elevation to the Oval Office would be transformative. "Barack's story was foundational," his campaign strategist recalls, "it authenticated his message."[401] To be sure, beyond the "hope and change" inherent in Obama's pigmentation, Axelrod threw into the campaign his standard fare, his signature boilerplate, as window-dressing. He marketed Obama as the candidate whose "civility" and "healing" "tone" would bring comity to the nation's capital, as he transcended the "squalid, debilitating politics" that wracked "a bitterly divided and corrupted Washington."[402] If this jaded political junkie, who had witnessed his entire adult life smarmy, squalid politics from up close, truly believed that a more modulated tone would miraculously transport Washington to Munchkin Land, the wonder is that he didn't purchase the rights to *Kumbaya* as Obama's campaign song or, better still, draft Oprah for President. The more plausible interpretation is, it was just another of Axelrod's cynical, moth-eaten marketing ploys, devoid, like his hollow slogans and ads, of substantive content. He additionally

sold Obama as the standard-bearer of a "new, inclusive politics," a unifier who, like Joshua, would bring down the walls dividing the American people, as they joined hands behind him in a common, transformative agenda.[403] But beneath the hoopla, the "change we can believe in" turned out to be the thin gruel of the standard Democratic Party platform, not exactly what the army of idealists who signed up for the campaign had hungered for. If any doubt lingered that Axelrod's iconic "change" slogan actually translated into "more of the same," Obama's cabinet choices (Larry Summers, Timothy Geithner, Robert Gates, Hillary Clinton…[404]) swiftly put it to rest. Indeed, Axelrod, campaign manager David Plouffe, and Obama emphatically concurred that scummy Democratic Party operative Rahm Emanuel be appointed White House Chief of Staff.[405] It was as if, once having helped snag the election, Axelrod, who served as a senior advisor in the Obama White House, recast his signature campaign slogan to: *Stasis We Can Believe In*. Like Obama, Axelrod extenuates in his memoir the "changing of the guard" in which the guard didn't change by pointing to the exigent circumstances: "no president in our lifetime had entered the job facing as many serious challenges … he would need a seasoned team," and "would have to take steps that some who voted for him would view as an abrogation of [his] principles."[406] In other words, POTUS couldn't afford the luxury of experimenting with neophytes, while force of circumstance compelled him to backtrack on his promises. But did Obama make the best of a bad situation or did he exploit the bad situation to pretend that he was doing his best, that his hands were tied and he couldn't do anything beyond the tried-and-true? Obama rode into office on a popular, impassioned mandate for systemic change not witnessed since Franklin Delano Roosevelt's election. It was fertile soil for radical experimentation. Indeed, F.D.R. confronted challenges of far greater scope and magnitude (Great Depression at home, Nazism abroad), while the New Deal

demonstrated not only that they could be met with visionary solutions, but also that no historic moment would be riper to test such solutions than an unprecedented crisis crying out for change, combined with a citizenry primed to make the necessary sacrifices so as to effect that change. To pull the whole thing off, however, it required a president in possession of the leadership attributes and the will—or who could be persuaded to muster the will—such that he could rise to the occasion. If the historic opportunity spawned by Obama's campaign was squandered, that's because his candidacy was built on a big lie. An army of idealistic youth had been conned. They believed—*they had been led to believe*—that the radical break represented by the election of a Black man as president would presage a radical change in the body-politic. That wasn't to be, and so far as Obama and his inner circle were concerned, it was never meant to be. Except for the "change" that a Black man now occupied the Oval Office, Axelrod himself repeatedly concedes, neither he nor Obama nor anyone else in Obama's entourage ever contemplated a decisive rupture with the past,[407] and constitutionally they couldn't stomach it. (It's revelatory of their true temperament, an index of where they really stood, that, according to Axelrod, the Obama administration planned in advance to reduce the deficit by "trimming the potentially explosive growth of Social Security and Medicare."[408]) The campaign's promise of unparalleled social change amounted to verbal prestidigitation, stage-managed by Axelrod, an old hand at it, and performed by a uniquely adept, as he was a sincerely fake, Elmer Gantry in blackface. In a telling passage in his memoir, when his spouse questions the wisdom of a presidential bid, Obama trumps her doubts by gesturing not to a particular legislative agenda he wants to enact or a bold new course he wants to chart for the country but, instead, to the symbolism were he to become president. Envisioning in his mind's eye that majestic occasion, he waxes lyrical to Michelle:

> I know that the day I raise my right hand and take the oath to be president of the United States, the world will start looking at America differently. I know that kids all around this country—Black kids, Hispanic kids, kids who don't fit in—they'll see themselves differently, too, their horizons lifted, their possibilities expanded. And that alone … that would be worth it.

He goes on to elaborate:

> If we won, it would mean that what had led me into politics wasn't just a pipe dream, that the America I believed in was possible, that the democracy I believed in was within reach.
> If we won, it would mean that I wasn't alone in believing that the world didn't have to be a cold, unforgiving place, where the strong preyed on the weak and we inevitably fell back into clans and tribes, lashing out against the unknown and huddling against the darkness.
> If these beliefs were made manifest, then my own life made sense, and I could then pass on that promise, that version of the world, to my children.[409]

Elmer considered, "Well, I've given those poor old birds some cheerfulness to go on with. By golly, there's nothing more important than to give people some happiness and faith to cheer them along life's dark pathway."

It shouldn't then altogether surprise that Obama's term of office proved so barren. It was his abiding conceit that, ultimately, it wasn't quotidian markers such as the passage of a bill or the signing of a treaty but, on the contrary, it would be his made-for-Hollywood life story that constituted the substance, the measure, of the man and his achievement. This once, alas, he was on point. Of course, electing a Black man president did constitute a threshold cultural event that inspired hope of racial opportunity (for Blacks) and racial transcendence (by whites). But what exactly did Obama himself *do*, wherein lay his own positive achievement, except to ride the wave of these uncorked enthusiasms and, once in office, to promptly betray them? "Power was granted him by a combination of historical circumstances—he only plucked the ripened fruit."[410]

If Obama could be counted on to do Wall Street's bidding, still, his machinations during the 2016 and 2020 Democratic primaries to derail Bernie Sanders' class-struggle locomotive did not just spring from that

guardian role allocated him by the powers-that-be, the quid pro quo for his figurehead status. It wasn't just that he was—in his own unwittingly prophetic metaphor—"an expensive prop to be taken out of the box under special conditions."[411] It also so happens that Obama is a stupefying narcissist. His "faith in his own virtue," one of Obama's acolytes observed, "is what made him authentic."[412] But such certitude, to boot, fed his megalomania. It was, however, a curiously apolitical megalomania: he didn't covet power as an end and there was no love lost between him and the means of attaining it. He affected a surly disdain of politics; it demeaned him. He made no secret at every level of office he occupied that the springs of politics, its give-and-take, rough-and-tumble, bored him to tears—therein resembling Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, while being the polar opposite of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.[413] In his sprawling, playful yet consequential, memoir, *My Life*, Bill Clinton repeatedly avows—here he can be trusted—that he relished, thrived on, the political vocation: "I loved politics," "I missed being governor and the excitement of politics," "I was excited about the coming legislative session," etc. To judge by Jimmy Carter's austere, earnest memoir, *Keeping Faith*, although not recoiling from the political fray, he was driven primarily by a commitment, born of his piety, to public service and his concomitant policy agenda, precisely laid out, to advance the public good (as he apprehended it). To be sure, Clinton, too, carried with him into the White House a clear-cut ("New Democrat") agenda, one which he so successfully implemented as to transform the Democratic Party. A love of politics, a call to duty: it can't be said that Obama's prime mover traced back to such sentiments; a political animal, he emphatically was not.[414] Nor, for that matter, did the substance of politics stimulate him. If he eschewed the tedious hard labor of politics out of the limelight—say, mastering the subject-matter of a bill or treaty—that's because he

was unwilling, indeed, constitutionally unable, to summon forth the energy and discipline it required.

"Yes, sir! The whole crowd! Turned to me like I was an All-American preacher! Wouldn't be so bad to be a preacher if you had a big church and— Lot easier than digging out law-cases and having to put it over a jury and another lawyer maybe smarter'n you are."

Each and any juxtaposition of Obama and his Democratic predecessors scarcely redounds to his advantage. A recurrent theme of Carter's memoir is the time and energy he invested in the study of policy challenges confronting him: "I approached the problem [of domestic oil pricing] with great reluctance and only after months of study"; "I studied carefully the detailed memorandum of conversations among Kissinger, Nixon, and the Chinese leaders"; "In preparation for the summit conference with President Brezhnev, I studied bilateral issues intensively"; "I had spent many hours [during the Iran hostages' crisis] studying the domestic and international laws and customs concerning claims settlements and other issues"; "The Alaska lands legislation [protecting its environment] was extremely intricate, involving not only great areas of land but also the most complex delineations of varying kinds of use…. I had studied the maps for many hours." Indeed, he was chastised by his advisors for being "bogged down in the details of administration" and "involved in too many things simultaneously." The centerpiece of Carter's memoir is his virtuoso performance climaxing in the 1978 Camp David Accords between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. He reports having put in "an awful lot of time studying the Middle East question." In preparation for Anwar Sadat's first visit to the White House in April 1977, "I had been studying about him and his country for several weeks, reviewing the long record of our nation's involvement in Northern Africa and the Sinai region, learning about the level of economic aid to Egypt from the United States and other countries, trying to understand Sadat's

relationship to his neighbors in Africa as well as to Israel," while three months later on the July 4th weekend, "I caught up on back reading … of the Middle Eastern questions. Studied maps of Israel, Jerusalem, history of the Palestinian question, and the United Nations resolutions." On the eve of the Camp David summit in 1978, "I was studying a thick volume, written especially for me, about two men—Menachem Begin and Anwar el-Sadat," and then "I went to Camp David with all my maps, briefing books, notes, summaries of past negotiations, and my annotated Bible, which I predicted—accurately, as it turned out—would be needed in my discussions with Prime Minister Begin. Before it was all over, I would also have mastered major portions of a good dictionary and thesaurus, and would have become an amateur semanticist as well." During the summit, "my world became … the study where I pored over my notes and maps of the Middle East." In general, Carter's preternatural mastery of the finest detail, not just at Camp David but on every policy issue that crossed his desk, cannot but humble. His tenacity, indefatigableness, and "negotiating strategy" (itself the result of intensive study) during the Egyptian-Israeli talks no less impress. Even as both the Egyptians and Israelis had an "objective" stake in reaching an agreement—Sadat wanted the Sinai back and a partnership with Washington, Begin wanted to remove Egypt from the Arab war front and a free hand in the occupied Palestinian territories—it's almost certainly the case that, in the absence of Carter's stewardship, the negotiations would have proven stillborn and no agreement would have been reached. Be that as it may, neither Obama's memoir nor those of his advisors suggest that he even remotely approached Carter's degree of engagement with policy issues. Meanwhile, in his memoir, Clinton professes that "I was both a political animal and a policy wonk" and "I loved politics and policy." Indeed, his grasp and recall of the most arcane points of public policy is legendary. It's also clear from his reminiscences that

Clinton was a voracious reader brimming with intellectual curiosity. In a typical aside, he notes without a trace of pedantry that, a few years after witnessing an apparently miraculous voodoo rite while in Haiti, he picked up a book by a Harvard University scientist that "managed to unravel the mystery." (It might also be noticed that he speaks of the voodoo religion without a trace of condescension.) When asked to compare Obama and Clinton, former Harvard president Larry Summers, who was a senior advisor in both administrations, had this to say:

> They are different in their approach. If you have a 10:00 a.m. meeting scheduled with President Obama, you had better be in your office at ten minutes before ten because the meeting might start early. If you have a 10:00 meeting with President Clinton, expect that the meeting will start at twenty minutes after ten o'clock. President Obama, it is a certainty that he will have read your memo before the meeting, and if you attempt to summarize the memo, he will say, "Larry, I read the memo." President Clinton, less certain that he will have read the memo in advance, but if he hasn't, he will turn the pages of your memo at this speed [Summers reaches for a newspaper in front of him and quickly flips the pages], and he will grasp your memo, turning the pages at that speed. President Obama, if you have a thirty minute meeting, you'd better do your business, because when there's five minutes left, his secretary will bring him in a card and you will be out of there in five minutes, and he will have given guidance on the broad parameters of what he wanted. President Clinton, he will do his job, and he will also help you do your job: "Larry, I was in the White House library, you know there's some new thinking about corporate dividend behavior that I was just reading about, have you incorporated that in your policy portfolios?" I once heard him talk to the Secretary of Transportation about how there were new, environmentally friendly, concretes, and perhaps we should include them in our highway programs. And so there was nothing that he wasn't gaining information independently, thinking about, and reading. So the meeting was less likely to last only thirty minutes, that's why he would be even later for his next meeting. But it was because he was curious about everything, and bringing knowledge and experience to bear on everything.

Even as he feigns balance, it's not hard to discern whose intellect impressed itself on Summers, and whose didn't. On those occasions when the current and ex-president shared a political

The debating set urged him to join them, but they were rabbit-faced and spectacled young men, and he viewed as obscene the notion of digging statistics about

platform, Obama was so outwitted by Clinton, it must have mortified.[415]

While his Democratic predecessors plunged deep into the tedious minutiae of policymaking, Obama preferred to shoot hoops, hit the links, and watch ESPN or hang out with the likes of Jay Z and Beyoncé. (His languid moral economy, he would later rue, was an atavism he couldn't shake from his Hawaiian boyhood.)[416] However, far from ennui inducing him to bow out of the political arena, Obama would instead quickly grow restive for higher and higher office. This feverishness sprang in part from commonplace ambition,[417] but in larger part from the *glitz* of politics, which titillated him. If POTUS did find his political stride, if his adrenaline did surge, it was in the theater and spectacle, pageantry and ceremony, pomp and circumstance, razzle-dazzle and razzmatazz, the meretricious trimmings of a public life in which he got to occupy, by himself, center stage, "looking presidential." Indeed, he conceived that if he, a Black man, carried himself in public with "dignity," head cocked back, pinched mien, a Lincolnesque overcoat, he would have fulfilled the mandate of his office. It befits the "Obama legacy" that the books chronicling his presidency are mostly photograph albums of POTUS in kaleidoscopic poses. Blissfully oblivious to the import of his words, a close, worshipful observer bestowed upon Obama the title of "best political performer in a generation." Indeed; but is that praise? And of his

immigration and the products of San Domingo out of dusty spotted books in the dusty spotted library.
...
It was a rule of this organization ... that everyone should, at lunch, be called by his first name. They shouted at the Reverend Mr. Gantry as "Elmer" or "Elm," while he called his haberdasher "Ike" and beamed on his shoe-seller as "Rudy." A few years before, this intimacy might have led him into indiscretions, into speaking vulgarly, or even desiring a drink. But he had learned his role of dignity now, and though he observed, "Dandy day, Shorty!" he was quick to follow it up unhesitatingly with an orotund, "I trust that you have been able to enjoy the beauty of the vernal foliage in the country this week." So Shorty and his pals went up and down informing the citizenry that Reverend Gantry was a "good scout, a prince of a good fellow, but a mighty deep thinker, and a real honest-to-God orator."

visceral response to adulating crowds, this observer further noted, "More than any other speaker I've seen, President Obama thrived on this enthusiasm."[418] It doesn't surprise, then, that Obama was interminably speechifying, as he construed unslackened volubility to be the essence of politics.[419] He persuaded himself, and his advisors were persuaded, that he could wing his presidency on such verbal pyrotechnics, as—rehearsing an elitist, antidemocratic prejudice—he professed that "people were moved by emotion, not facts."[420] When in doubt, when his "legislative agenda stalled," the panacea he and his handlers reflexively seized upon was, give another speech.[421] If Franklin Delano Roosevelt succeeded where he didn't, it wasn't, according to Obama, because F.D.R.'s legislative agenda was more robust, innovative and enlightened; it wasn't because, in a symbiotic relationship, a mass popular movement galvanized F.D.R., while he in turn proved receptive to it; but, on the contrary, it owed to Roosevelt being the better *performer*, "projecting confidence in the overall endeavor, impressing upon the public that the government had a handle on the situation."[422] It's hard to conceive a shallower parsing of F.D.R.'s triumph, but it's also hard to conceive a shallower parser than Obama. As political candidate, Obama was a character straight out, a product, of Central Casting, a quasi-Black "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington."[423] Except the original Mr. Smith stood for something, something decent, whereas Obama stood for nothing, except himself. After probing every detail, however tangential, every nook and cranny, however remote, of Obama's life across a sprawling 1,500 pages, his authoritative biographer, David J. Garrow, concluded on a note as paradoxical as it was incongruous with his authorial investment: "the vessel was hollow."[424] In other words, Garrow had dispatched himself on a *Guinness Book of World's Records* wild goose chase. *There was nothing there.* To establishment "experts" Obama delegated the terra incognita of formulating public policy, and the

responsibility then devolved upon him, like "the great communicator," Ronald Reagan, who was his lineal precursor, of selling this prepackaged product to the American people as his inspired "vision." The writer Gore Vidal famously dubbed Reagan "the acting President"; ditto Obama. His very first presidential act, before even assuming office, proved to be the template of Obama's entire tenure in the White House. Having to decide where he stood on George W. Bush's "rescue package" of the banks, here's Obama's account of how he proceeded:

> I had begun consulting with an ad hoc advisory group that included former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, former Clinton Treasury secretary Larry Summers, and legendary investor Warren Buffett…. Their briefings proved invaluable in helping me understand the nuts and bolts of the crisis and evaluate the various responses being proposed…. I felt confident that on the substance of the economy…, I knew what I was talking about.

It speaks volumes to his hubris and superficiality that Obama professes to have gotten a handle on the "nuts and bolts" and "substance" of the economy after "briefings" by some Establishment heavyweights. Were this recondite, overwhelmingly mathematical, discipline only so simple. In any event, if Volcker et al. were the ventriloquists and Obama the dummy coached and crammed by them, it can hardly shock if the candidate of "change we can believe in" changed precious little in the lives of the common folk—non-white as well as white—who had invested their hopes in him.[425]

When the real-deal Mr. Smith came along in 2016

The preparation for his labors was not too

The greatest urge was his memory of holding his audience, playing on them. To move people—Golly! He wanted to be addressing somebody on something right now, and being applauded!

…

And—he was exalted by his own oratory.

…

Before his sermon he looked from brother to brother. He loved them all, that moment; they were his regiment, and he the colonel; his ship's crew, and he the skipper; his patients, and he the loyal physician. He began slowly, his great voice swelling to triumphant certainty as he talked. Voice, sureness, presence, training, power, he had them all. Never had he so well liked his role; never had he acted so

fatiguing. He read through six copies of Mrs. Riddle's magazine and, just as he had learned the trade-terms of evangelism, so he learned the technologies of New Thought; the Cosmic Law of Vibration; I Affirm the Living Thought. He labored through a chapter of "The Essence of Oriental Mysticism, Occultism, and Esotericism" and accomplished seven pages of the "Bhagavad-Gita"; and thus was prepared to teach disciples how to win love and prosperity.

well; never had he known such sincerity of histrionic instinct.

and then 2020, he had to be stopped. The contrast between Barack and Bernie couldn't have been starker. It distilled down to pristine essence two diametrically opposite promises of change. Whereas Obama's campaign was anchored singularly in his person —by premeditation and calculation, his Newtonian-challenging platform had no planks; Sanders' campaign was anchored squarely in his platform—Medicare for All, abolish college tuition and student debt, investment in jobs and infrastructure, a Green New Deal. The Barack-Bernie juxtaposition put in sharp relief an identity-based versus an issue-based politics. (So allergic was the Obama campaign to class politics that when the candidate offhandedly gestured to his tax policy as designed to "redistribute the wealth," his campaign manager, Plouffe, "blanched at the choice of words."[426]) The groundswell of support for Sanders' candidacy also registered a repudiation of the politically infantile, cult-like, blind faith invested in Obama, The Hip Black Messiah, in favor of a rational, politically mature trust in Bernie, born of his long track record, through thick and thin, be it popular or more often unpopular, that he was as good as his word. If he emanated charisma, it was because the scruffy, rumpled, Brooklyn-born, Jewish septuagenarian was so transparent; it was a mystique-less, anti-charismatic charisma. Obama the megalomaniac dreaded that Bernie was displacing him as the prophetic voice in U.S. politics, not least among idealistic young people who, facing a bleak, futureless future, had had quite enough, thank you, of vacant identity politics. Indeed, were Sanders elected, his signature piece of legislation would have been Medicare for All,

which would have dispatched the Affordable Care Act, Obama's only memorable domestic achievement in eight years of office, the long and the short of his so-called legacy, into the dumpster. Hence, as if a man possessed, the determination of Obama—always from behind the scenes or via surrogates, as it wouldn't be good form for The Prophet to expose his jealousies—to pull out all the stops in order to slay the Bernie dragon.[427] On the other hand, if he had been the transformative figure he pretended to be, Obama would have graciously claimed and endorsed Sanders as his natural successor, Bernie would have won the Black vote in the South Carolina primary, then swept Super Tuesday, and we'd quite possibly be in the midst of a President Sanders administration. If this sounds implausible, it's only because the first conditional is so farfetched: Obama was, substantively, anything but a rupture with politics-as-usual.

* * *

Apart from African-Americans, Obama cast a spell over one other identity demographic. It used to be, you could always spot a phony white liberal a mile away as he—it was mostly males—made a public spectacle of loving jazz.[428] Now, they—women[429] as well as men—make a public spectacle of loving Obama. If he wasn't a creation of white liberals—for better or worse, Obama was largely a self-creation—still, he leaned on them to market his product. Obama campaign manager David Plouffe recalls in his memoir that "having three white guys as the most inner core"—himself, David Axelrod, and Robert Gibbs—"was the source of some internal tension."[430] The unctuous prototype in the world of letters of these white liberal groupies was David Remnick, editor of the *New Yorker* and Obama's semi-official hagiographer. Russian revolutionist Leon Trotsky famously skewered an early twentieth century reformist labor bureaucrat as "the ideal Socialist leader for successful dentists."[431] The Jewish son of a New

Jersey dentist, Remnick was, and still is, the bellwether of successful woke liberals. He uses *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*, chronicling Obama's path to victory, as a vehicle to establish how down *he* be wit' da hood. Hence the obligatory gestures to "Malcolm." Who would've thunk dey be on a first name basis? He even be intimately conversin' with Obama 'bout Stokely and Huey! Then there's Shaquille Remnick riffin' on Obama's high school basketball coach:

> McLachlin's teams were successful playing the sort of full-court, maximum-pressure defensive press that Dean Smith used at North Carolina and employing many of the disciplined offensive plays that John Wooden ran at U.C.L.A.

Then Miles Remnick discerns in Obama's speeches invoking M.L.K. "the same sense of reverence as a jazz musician quoting a passage in Armstrong or Coltrane." Damn, Remnick, he be mo' down than Sis' Robin DiAngelo! Remnick's meditations transport him to the strangest of zones. A long, tedious chapter locates Obama's fabulist memoir, *Dreams from My Father*, in the literary trajectory of slave narratives such as Frederick Douglass'. Blessed with an idyllic, carefree and coddled childhood, Obama spent the first two decades of his life, inter alia, attending the most exclusive private school in Hawaii, where he enjoyed a reputation for three things: his smile, his basketball, and his choom (weed). Douglass spent the first two decades of his life a slave. To be sure, Remnick does concede that Obama was "more privileged." Do tell. (No less tone-deaf, Obama observes in his presidential memoir that he and Senate majority leader Harry Reid were joined by the bond of "overcoming long odds," as Reid was "born dirt-poor" and "spent his early years in a shack without indoor plumbing or a telephone." Henry Louis Gates, who is a virtuoso at crawling on the ground while typing on his keyboard, dubbed Obama "a post-modern Frederick Douglass.") Whereas Remnick treats *Dreams* as a more or less accurate "memoir" that "contains many of the

familiar features of African-American autobiography," Garrow demonstrates in numbing detail that it "was not a memoir or an autobiography; it was instead … without any question *a work of historical fiction*" (emphasis in original). Still, isn't Remnick an invaluable historical guide? After he quotes Michelle exhorting a crowd to vote for her husband "not because of the color of his skin, it is because of the quality and consistency of his character," our *New Yorker* maven chimes in: "an echo of King's 'content of their character.'" Thanks. Remnick goes on to upbraid a far-right "conspiracy theorist" who decried Obama's "cult of personality": "He must have known that the phrase 'cult of personality' … was the phrase that Nikita Khrushchev had used to denounce Stalin for the purges and for the murder of millions of Soviet citizens." In other words, whoever gestured to the perfectly obvious—the personality cult surrounding Obama, which even his supporters acknowledged—was actually signaling that Obama was a mass murderer. Talk about loony conspiracy theorists…. The vast preponderance of Remnick's personal testimonies on Obama come from the likes of Valerie Jarrett, a close personal aide, who cried out Obama's tragedy, the cross he had to bear. "He's been bored to death his whole life. He's just too talented to do what ordinary people do. He would never be satisfied with what ordinary people do." *Amazing grace, that His spectral presence deign descend upon we worthless and wretched souls.* After Obama acknowledged kids in an impoverished Brazilian community with a hand gesture, Jarrett beatifically sighed, "I'll bet that wave changed the lives of some of those kids forever."[432]

At one point, Remnick mocks the loyalty of a hack politician's flunkey as being "North Korean in its blind passion." It happens that that description also wonderfully captures him. Remnick waxes orgasmic at Obama's 2002 speech opposing the Iraq invasion: "an exquisitely calibrated rhetorical performance" demonstrating Obama's

"insistence on complexity." In fact, it evidenced his calibrated expedience—playing to everyone, estranging no one, always watching his flank—made manifest in Obama's exquisitely flat-footed refrain: "I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars." With characteristic modesty, in his presidential memoir Obama describes the forebodings in his Iraq speech as "prescient." But they merely echoed the standard fare in antiwar publications and at antiwar rallies —invading Iraq would result in an easy battlefield victory, but a fraught occupation afterwards. Politically, Obama had hardly staked out a daring position: the liberal Chicago district he represented opposed an attack; the U.S. senator from Illinois, Dick Durbin, opposed an attack, and his seasoned campaign manager, David Axelrod, predicted that an antiwar speech would abet Obama's own Senate bid; while, once President Bush launched the invasion, Obama threw his full support behind it.[433] Of Obama's celebrated 2008 "race" speech, Remnick gushes at his "capacity to inhabit different points of view—a mastery that sometimes seemed more anthropological than political." But if he easily slipped into "different points of view," it was not because of his "anthropological" virtuosity (whatever that portentous piffle might mean), but, on the contrary, because Obama didn't have a point of view; he had no strong opinions about anything; he'd mastered the art of earnestly saying all things to all people; his woke acolytes never called him out on his duplicity, as they gushed over or made ten thousand excuses for him; and his friends in high places didn't give a darn what he said, so long as, once push came to shove, he did their bidding. If the race speech was extraordinary, it was because, in order to save his faltering campaign, Obama didn't hesitate to throw both his grandmother (who nurtured and doted over him) and his pastor (who befriended and mentored him) under the bus. Although you'd never guess it reading Remnick's book, already at the inception of his political career in the Illinois State Senate,

"disloyalty and opportunism … were becoming Obama's modus operandi as he grasped for higher office…. Throughout Obama's rise, most of his relationships were expedient: Once he had no more use for supporters, he dropped them from his circle." Indeed, upon deciding to enter the political ring, all of Obama's critical life choices proved transactional. His intimates uniformly recalled that Obama "did not have a religious bone in his body." Still, the recalcitrant fact was that —in Obama's words—"Americans are a religious people." So he discovered God and flaunted his piety; "but among the scores of people who knew Barack well over the years, very, very few believed that religious faith played any significant role in his life." Further to this point, none of his romantic attachments had been with Black women. But it was then driven home that "if he was going to enter public life…, he could not marry someone white." So he conveniently fell in love with a Black woman. Indeed, political calculation even lurked behind Obama's fateful decision to, as it were, *pass in reverse*—that is, reinvent himself as a "Black" man. No one in his circle growing up and well into his adulthood noticed any race consciousness in him, let alone that he had been riven—as he would later pretend—by a racial identity-crisis; they themselves barely engaged him as "Black," while he himself barely engaged Black people. The irony was, for Obama to celebrate America's promise as it stood poised to elect a Black president, he first had to make himself Black.[434]

In his other signature speeches as well, Obama oozed opportunism. In the 2009 Cairo address, he adjured Palestinians to "abandon violence," but he fell mute on Israeli violence. This exhortation of his came just after Israel wreaked massive death and destruction on Gaza's imprisoned population, mostly children, mostly refugees, during Operation Cast Lead. In his presidential memoir, Obama can't decide whether his default-setting drivel in Cairo marked "the beginnings of a new Middle East," while his speechwriter speculates

that Obama's mere presence in Cairo triggered the Arab Spring. On the occasion of his 2009 Nobel speech, Obama declared that, if the U.S. resorts to force, it's "not because we seek to impose our will" but, on the contrary, "because we seek a better future for our children and grandchildren, and we believe that their lives will be better if others' children and grandchildren can live in freedom and prosperity." If Donald Trump had been awarded the Nobel (he wasn't any less deserving), the patriotic frenzy of his speech would probably have set it apart from Obama's, but only by six degrees. When he can no longer evade Obama's habitual trimming, Remnick, as if Aristotle writing on politics, interposes in mitigation that grassroots leaders like Martin Luther King didn't have to compromise, whereas politicians had no choice. Although the head of a popular movement "might gain a stronger foothold on the path to Heaven," Obama "was a politician, not the leader of a movement. And to be a successful politician you had to make a few compromises along the way." Remnick seems unaware that movement leaders are no less prone to and tempted by compromise than politicians. It was King's refusal to make one such compromise that set him apart from the pack. Like most Negro leaders, Whitney Young of the Urban League entreated King to stay silent on the Vietnam War so as to secure President Johnson's funding of the War on Poverty. As if anticipating Remnick's apologetic banalities, King rejoined: "Whitney, what you're saying may get you a foundation grant, but it won't get you into the Kingdom of Truth." The problem wasn't that Obama made "a few compromises"; for sure, King made his fair number. It was that Obama lacked *any* principles. In fact, Remnick concedes this, albeit elliptically: "he was a pragmatist, a politician. To change anything, he needed to win." But if he was forever trimming his sails, what exactly would he change if he won? The verdict after two terms of the "hope and change" president has by now come in: a resounding very little, and some of it for the worse.[435]

The telling thing is, after slogging through Remnick's 600-page tome, the reader isn't a whit the wiser where Obama stood on anything or what he stood for. If the book parses not his policy but, instead, his prose, not his substance but, instead, his speeches, that's because Obama couldn't claim ownership of a single distinctive policy. When he set out on the presidential campaign trail, Obama wasn't driven by a core message, a specific policy agenda to which he was wedded, that was then amplified by the hype engulfing him. On the contrary, he was hype in search of a core. His campaign manager, Plouffe, enumerated as among the first tasks confronting him, to "flesh out our core message and provide some substance—like health care and energy plans—to go along with the hype."[436] The "core" message distilled by Obama's campaign team—in particular, strategist David Axelrod—could have been lifted from a Democratic Party primer; it was as daring as walking a tightrope one inch off the ground:

> change versus a broken status quo; people versus the special interests; a politics that would lift people and the country up; and a president who would not forget the middle class.[437]

He spent from a month to four months in each city. He hired the ballroom of the second best hotel for lectures three evenings a week, and advertised himself in the newspapers as though he were a cigarette or a brand of soap.

In the meantime, Axelrod marketed his client as if he were a box of *Cocoa Puffs* cereal. The slogans Axelrod uploaded were so vacuous that Obama himself initially demurred: "I'm not sold on this slogan you guys have cooked up. *Change We Can Believe In*. Do you really think it says enough? Nothing about issues at all." But Obama went along, and "the slogan ended up being one of the signature pieces of the campaign."[438] The campaign's other big slogan was also championed by Axelrod so, unsurprisingly, it, too, was of gravitas-defying weightlessness. Although initially recoiling (he says) at the cheesiness of *Yes We Can*, Obama eventually came to "fully believe[] the power of those three words."[439] Two hagiographic editors

of his speeches acclaimed this Obama slogan as his "signature phrase" that "became a cultural phenomenon." In fitting tribute to this awesome rhetorical legacy, Obama selected as the parting words of his last presidential speech, "Yes, we can, Yes, we did, Yes, we can."[440] Barack, your presidency is over: "Yes, you could have, Yes, you might have, No, you didn't." His peroration strangely brings to mind something Hannah Arendt wrote in her account of the Eichmann trial. Recalling the Nazi executioner's final words before his own hanging—"Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall not forget them"—Arendt mocked their "grotesque silliness," which was a "lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought defying banality of evil."[441] Obama's parting words might not have been grotesque, fearsome or evil, but they're surely redolent of silliness and word-and-thought defying banality. Albeit in a different context, Trotsky captured the essence of Obama's stage(d) politics: "His political thoughts were the fruits of oratorical acoustics. That is how the selection of slogans went on. That is how the program was consolidated. That is how the 'leader' took shape out of the raw material."[442] In a word, his public posture, himself—they possessed all the profundity of a sonorous ditty. Beneath his silver spangle shimmering sheen, Obama calibrated his actual politics to the wavering dead-center of the Democratic Party. Along the way from the Illinois state senate to the White House, he had supported the death penalty, opposed gay marriage, and vacillated on abortion and single-payer health care. The only two things he and Hillary Clinton disagreed on in the 2008 Democratic primary were whether or not to meet enemy leaders without preconditions (Obama, yes; Hillary, no) and whether or not to temporarily suspend a federal tax on gas (Obama, no; Hillary, yes).[443] In other words, Obama's actual politics were a yawn, not exactly the stuff of the breathless bestseller that Remnick was tasked, or tasked himself, to write. If his policy agenda

was banal,[444] perhaps it was Obama's political vision that placed him in a class all his own.[445] But it turns out his conception of politics (later articulated in his presidential memoir) is as lame as it is underwhelming: "the observance of rules that allowed us to sort out or at least tolerate our differences, and government policies that raised living standards and improved education enough to temper humanity's baser impulses." If the blur that was Obama does finally come into focus in *The Bridge*, it's, ironically, as the ultimate—in Obama's own words—"Rorschach test." In fact, in his memoir, Obama positively *boasts* that he "had pulled off a neat trick during the campaign" by running as a "blank canvas upon which supporters across the ideological spectrum could project their own vision of change." It's not every politician who is so brazen as to flaunt that he won an election by standing for nothing. Later, in a rare moment of self-awareness, Obama would observe of his adulating crowds that "on some level" they "were cheering an illusion." In an epilogue to the paperback edition of his book, Remnick smugly remarks that, even as he's been widely misunderstood, Obama's "traditionally center-left politics were hiding in plain sight." But wasn't it court stenographers like Remnick who dutifully, deliberately, diligently, and deceptively concealed *from* plain sight the vacuousness of Obama's politics?[446]

At all events, out to sell his product in order to sell himself *to* the product, Remnick retails Obama from every conceivable angle, however contradictory, as he simultaneously tantalizes and assuages the reader: his subject is brainy but not nerdy, progressive but not extremist, and—most important—Black but not *that* Black. He's a transgressive Mr. Clean. He's a sexy and safe generic sui generis. He's a warm and fuzzy warm-and-fuzzy. It is as if the subject, author and target audience of *The Bridge* have stepped out of a modern-day *Emperor's New Clothes*: a white woke wet-dream politician who's, alas, an empty set; a hack publicist who loads the empty set with a surfeit of

zeros; and a woke crowd who pretend that preceding the multiple zeros they descry not another cypher but a positive integer. What's absent, of course, is someone finally shouting out loud what's so plain to the naked eye. Or, if you prefer, as the orotund voice reverberates across the land, a Toto to pull aside the curtain. (No matter how many times Obama stuck it to him, Bernie stayed mum.) If it hasn't been Remnick, that's because he's not only a prime beneficiary of the Obama cult—it's no small advantage if the editor of a woke publication can boast of having the President's ear; indeed, which Hackensack, New Jersey Jewish dentist's son could resist the frisson of intimate tête-à-têtes with The President?—he is also, as both *New Yorker* editor and official hagiographer, one of the cult's principal architects. He's Arthur Schlesinger Jr. redux, except that the creator of the J.F.K. Camelot myth came from solid WASP stock and did know history; Schlesinger's wasn't just tinsel prose. Still, for all Remnick's valiant efforts, it's hard not to walk away from *The Bridge* wondering whether it would have been better titled *The Bridge to Nowhere* or *I Have a Bridge to Sell You.* The title truest to life, however, would have been *Running on Empty*. Were Remnick's book to make it onto the silver screen, the marquee would properly be emblazoned *The Greatest Scam Ever Sold*; on stage, it's *Much Ado about Nothing*; as a pop song, *Bridge over Shallow Waters* or *The Bridges of Silicon Valley*. (Obama lavished praise on and was wildly popular among the tech giants.)

Elmer liked the company of what he regarded as intellectual people. He never understood what they were saying, but to hear them saying it made him feel superior.

The *New Yorker* editor, however, was just one among many. Throughout his political ascent, Obama surrounded himself and forged a symbiotic relationship with the Remnick prototype: liberal, paternalistic, affluent, Jewish, Ivy League graduate; skilled in the art of massaging Obama's fragile ego—which was the flipside of his imperious conceit, as insecurity and vanity go hand in hand[447]—by

feigning awe of him. Obama campaign strategist David Axelrod recalled that he "and many of Obama's early mentors and supporters in politics were Jews."[448] "He feels most comfortable with upper-middle-class white and Jewish men who consider themselves very smart, very savvy, and very effective in getting what they want," Cornel West shrewdly observed about Obama. "[Harvard president] Larry Summers blows his mind because he's so smart. He's got Establishment connections. He's embracing me. It is this smartness, this truncated brilliance, that titillates and stimulates brother Barack and makes him feel at home." On close inspection, it was an intricate, multifaceted *pas de deux*: they stroked his ego to beef up their woke credentials, while he curried their favor to market his street-but-safe tightrope persona; they clung to his ever-soaring coattails in order to gain access to power, while he depended on them to supply the technical know-how that he not only lacked but that also left him flat; they invested in the Great Black Hope of rich white liberals, while he targeted Big Jewish Donors to fill his poor Black coffer. If it was *de rigueur* in these circles to proclaim Obama "brilliant,"[449] it wasn't only to win him over and to broadcast one's wokeness. The liberal racists parked at Martha's Vineyard reflexively set the bar so low for Black people that Obama could wow them just by correctly ordering subject and predicate and tossing in an adjective or adverb. Make no mistake about it: the woke brigade *preferred* that Obama be mediocre so as to validate their primordial prejudice that even the best among "them" can barely tread water; were his truly a refulgent cast of mind, they'd be gasping for air. In an unusual moment of candor, Obama himself acknowledged the limits of his mental range: "I'm not some big, original thinker," he told a confidante. "But I listen well, I synthesize ideas, and I can generally figure out how to communicate what we need to do."[450] Brilliant? No. He was the consummate poseur, adept at

appropriating the ideas of others, and repeating them with a fluency and hauteur as if he had formulated them on his own.

Of the Jewish-genius masseurs in Obama's life, the distinction of most preposterous probably belonged to Harvard Law School professor Laurence Tribe. He went so far as to rave about Obama's "deep insight" into physics. In subsequent correspondence with this writer, Tribe, who graduated summa cum laude in mathematics from Harvard, elaborated on "the rapidity and depth with which he [Obama] picked up on subtle concepts in physics … from the core ideas of general relativity to the competing interpretations of quantum mechanics." Before stepping into Tribe's classroom, Obama had taken "a minimum of science" at Occidental College, and a quasi-course in physics when he transferred to Columbia University—it was informally dubbed "physics for poets." He apparently never took a math course. "Obama caught up quickly in subjects like physics, in which he had no background," Remnick credulously reports in *The Bridge*, to the point that he was "going over the literature on Einstein" with Tribe. It would appear the *New Yorker* editor can't distinguish between, on the one hand, the "very painful" and "very severe intellectual work" of a Bertrand Russell writing *Principia Mathematica* and, on the other, janitor Matt Damon nonchalantly solving equations on the M.I.T. blackboard in *Good Will Hunting.* Mastering relativity isn't—no filial disrespect intended—yanking a wisdom tooth. It could perhaps be urged, in partial mitigation of his sins against the mind, that the Harvard Law School professor was overwhelmed by sins of the flesh. It seems Tribe was smitten, big time, by the "lanky kid" clad in "jeans and a sweatshirt." Although he professes that he and his student blissfully contemplated together the "curvature" of the Constitution, it's more probable that Tribe was contemplating the curvature of his student's constitution, while Obama was calculating how long he had to hang with this dork in

order to get graded on a curve. In general, it cannot but bewilder that this nondescript nonentity, with no academic record to speak of, would suddenly emerge, like Athene leaping full-grown from the head of Zeus, at Harvard Law School, amongst peers who graduated first in their class at the top universities in the country, as a once-in-a-generation wunderkind. Like Tribe, former dean of Harvard Law School Martha Minow, who is also Jewish, paid tribute to Obama as "the best student I ever had." Not, it is to be hoped, in the Shakespearean sense of "Mad in pursuit, and in possession so; / Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme." But one does wonder. Minow had next-to-nothing to say about Obama's contribution to a joint research project for her course. Instead, after deeming "parts" of it "just beautiful"—which *parts*, pray tell?—she cut to the chase and proposed that "we can get together for a meal or drink to talk about the ideas." Did she also plan on inviting him up to see her etchings? Another of Harvard Law's illustrious Jewish faculty, Gerald Frug, was so dazzled by the surpassing brilliance of Obama's classroom insights that he incorporated them on the final. Frug's exam "posed just one essay question," Garrow reports, that "was utterly remarkable because it cited classroom comments made by one particular student: Barack Obama." The exam instructions referred back to "a class discussion" when

> a member of the class argued that there were two fundamentally different strategies that African-American communities … could adopt to better their social and economic conditions. On the one hand, he argued, members of the community could stay in the city, organize together to gain political control of the city government…. On the other hand, he said, community members could abandon the inner city, integrate suburbs and other prosperous areas…. [W]hat impact does local government law have on these alternative strategies?

"Never before and never again," Frug later reminisced, "have I ever referred to a student in an exam. It was a real statement … of his impact on the course, that I did this." Were suburban relocation so

ready an option, it's cause for wonder why Obama became (however briefly) a community organizer and didn't just rent a fleet of moving vans.[451] Did Obama and Frug watch one episode too many of "Green Acres"?[452]

Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture Near You!

Barack Obama titled the first volume of his presidential memoir *A Promised Land*. The title denotes both that his elevation to the highest office in the land redeemed America's promise, and that he was destined via his presidency to lead us, like Moses, to the promised land. To the jaundiced reader plowing through the memoir's suffocatingly self-absorbed pages, the title comes also to signify the gathering euphoria as one approaches and then, finally, reaches the last of its 700 pages. This joy is alloyed, however, by the recognition that *Promised Land* covers only the first 2.5 years of Obama's eight-year term of office. (It ends with Osama bin Laden's extrajudicial killing in May 2011.) A quick mental computation as to what's coming next—2.5 years:700 pages as 8 years:2,240 pages—cannot but induce suicidal despair.

Promised Land is not really a political memoir. Rather, it is an incongruous grab-bag of cloying family snapshots, policy-wonk arcana, and rarefied ruminations conveyed in occasionally elegant, but oftener too elegant, as in precious, prose.[453] (Surprisingly, it also contains basic errors in English usage.[454]) Its purpose is to entrench Obama's genius—not so much, however, in the form of a historical document as in the raw material of a screenplay.[455] The recital of his official doings thus every few pages cuts away to his fairytale marriage and beautiful, wondrous daughters, little Malia and Sasha. There

are (not that anyone's counting…) some *forty* different page references to Malia alone. On the other hand, Obama's drone policy, which resulted in thousands of deaths, rates cursory mention on seven different pages (the index doesn't even include a discrete "drone" listing). No doubt Obama's children were *just adorable*, and kids *do* say the darnedest things, but does the reader need be privy to every cutesy utterance of theirs?[456] Of his beloved spouse, Obama divulges the heart-rending news, "despite Michelle's success and popularity, I continued to sense an undercurrent of tension in her, subtle but constant, like the faint thrum of a hidden machine."[457] (Fade-out to strains of "Love Story")[458]

Every presidential memoir boasts of the protagonist's achievements and rationalizes controversial decisions, so Obama's laundry list and defensiveness can't fairly be held against him. He, of course, includes the Affordable Care Act among his legislative triumphs; while, per his handling of the economy, Obama writes that "even if it were possible for me to go back in time and get a do-over, I can't say that I would make different choices." If, in general, he didn't achieve quite what he hoped to, it was because of the Republican no-goodniks—or, as Obama elsewhere speculates, the American people weren't quite ready for their Prophet: "I was ten or twenty years too early."[459] Still, even for a presidential memoir, its solipsistic hyperbole stands in relief. Of his first two years in office, Obama declares, "Taken together, our administration and the Democrat-controlled Congress could rightly claim to have gotten more done, to have delivered more significant legislation that made a real impact on the lives of the American people, than any single session of Congress in the past forty years." Were this true, it's cause for wonder the

trouncing suffered by the Democrats in the 2010 midterm elections.[460] He goes on to say that "we'd managed to pull off the most significant lame-duck session in modern history."[461] If this be an achievement, it's on the order of "the tallest building in Wichita, Kansas." Of the 2011 attack he ordered on Qaddafi's forces in Libya, Obama quotes this hosanna from sycophantic aide Samantha Power: "It was the quickest international military intervention to prevent a mass atrocity in modern history." Leaving aside whether it's factually true (probably not—a "mass atrocity" wasn't impending), if you attach enough qualifiers ("quickest" "international" "mass" "modern"), what feat isn't unique? Curiously, although he has reportedly described post-intervention Libya as a "shit show," Obama falls deafeningly silent in his memoir on this catastrophe.[462] Obama touts his support for the 2011 protests in Tahrir Square against Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak. The execrable Power chimes in how "proud she was to be a part of the administration" on this occasion, while flaky Ben Rhodes (Obama's speechwriter) beams, "It's pretty amazing being a part of history like that." But this presidential beacon of human rights held back on publicly calling for Mubarak to resign until after the tyrant's fate was sealed, and even then Obama concedes, "I could have lived with any genuine transition plan he might have presented, even if it left much of the regime's existing network intact."[463] One triumph Obama clearly savors is his appearance at the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009. He depicts in buoyant prose the climactic scene in which he barges in on a private meeting of other world leaders, to dress down in public the Chinese head of state:

With a gaggle of staffers and Secret Service agents hustling behind us, we made our way upstairs. At the end of a long corridor, we found what we were looking for: a room with glass walls, just large enough to hold a conference table, around which sat Premier Wen, Prime Minister Singh, and Presidents Lula and Zuma, along with a few of their ministers. The Chinese security team began moving forward to intercept us, hands held up as if ordering us to stop, but realizing who we were, they hesitated. With a smile and a nod, Hillary and I strolled past and entered the room, leaving a fairly noisy tussle between security details and the staffers in our wake.

"You ready for me, Wen?" I called out watching the Chinese leader's face drop in surprise. I then walked around the table to shake each of their hands. "Gentlemen! I've been looking everywhere for you. How about we see if we can do a deal?"

Before anybody could object, I grabbed an empty chair and sat down.

…

I leaned back in my chair and looked directly at Premier Wen.

"Mr. Premier, we're running out of time," I said, "so let me cut to the chase."

…

Once the translators in the room caught up to me, the Chinese environmental minister, a burly, round-faced man in glasses, suddenly stood up and started speaking in Mandarin, his voice rising, his hands waving in my direction, his face reddening in agitation. He went on like this for a minute or two, the entire room not quite sure what was happening. Eventually, Premier Wen lifted a slender, vein-lined hand and the minister abruptly sat back down. I suppressed the urge to laugh and turned to the young Chinese woman who was translating for Wen.

"What did my friend there just say?" I asked. Before she could answer, Wen shook his head and whispered something. The translator nodded and turned back to me.

"Premier Wen says that what the environmental minister said is not important," she explained. "Premier Wen asks if you have the agreement you're proposing with you, so that everyone can look at the specific language again."

"By the time I left the room," Obama smugly recalls, "the group had agreed to our proposal." His "body man," Reggie Love, is then said to have "flashed a wide grin:" "I gotta say, boss, that was some real gangster shit back there."[464] The fact that the summit was a bust (largely owing to U.S. intransigence), and his proposal proved stillborn doesn't perturb Obama. Indeed, it's beside the point: for, can't you just

see Denzel on the silver screen, his hips undulating as he swaggers in and swaggers out of the conference room?

Beyond cataloging his stupendous record of achievement,[465] Obama impresses on the reader his surpassing brilliance. Not since Comrade Stalin lectured on linguistics has the world borne witness to such omniscience. He delivers forth mini Wikipedia entries on just about everything from the history of presidential inaugurations ("for his second inauguration, Teddy Roosevelt … threw in a passel of cowboys and the Apache chief Geronimo"); to deep-sea oil drilling ("Macondo proved to be an especially difficult [oil] field, mainly due to fragile formation and uneven levels of fluid pressure"); to the epic struggle along the Mississippi River ("for centuries, humans had fought to bend this primordial landscape to their will.… Yet, when it came to the ocean and the mighty river that emptied into it, the victories of engineering turned out to be fleeting, the prospect of control illusory"); to the Arab world's glorious heritage ("the extraordinary contributions of Islamic civilizations in the advancement of mathematics, science, and art"); to Kabul in the 1970s ("ragged around the edges but peaceful and growing"); to Greece's failing economy ("for decades, the country had been plagued by low productivity, a bloated and inefficient public sector, massive tax avoidance, and unsustainable pension obligations"); to China's fiscal chicanery ("for years, it had used state subsidies, as well as currency manipulation and trade dumping, to artificially depress the price of its exports and undercut manufacturing operations in the United States") and its cynical foreign policy ("for Wen and the rest of China's leaders, foreign policy remained purely transactional. How much they gave and how much they got would depend not on

abstract principles of international law but on their assessment of the other side's power and leverage"). Then there's Sun Tzu Obama. He announces to his hapless military advisors who are mulling over an attack on Qaddafi's troops: "I think I've got a plan that might work." The plan, incidentally, quite excited him. Francis Scott Obama later gets off "imagining the scenes unfolding more than five thousand miles away: the rush of missiles piercing the air; the cascade of explosions, the rubble and smoke; the faces of Qaddafi loyalists as they looked to the sky and calculated their chances of survival." Pity his Nobel audience that he received the prize before he could regale them with this nocturnal eruption. Then, as one intelligence officer tells him that a raid on Osama bin Laden's compound had a 40-60 percent chance of success while another puts the odds at 60-80, Obama brusquely, crisply, oh, so presidentially, weighs in, "But ultimately, this is a fifty-fifty call. Let's move on." Can't you just see Denzel delivering that line? In parleys on military matters, Obama would often resort to snappy, spiffy phrases. Of a decision regarding the dispatch of more troops to Afghanistan—how many and for how long?—he queries his war council, "Why can't we move the bell curve to the left, get the troops in and out sooner?" When he's decided his course of action, Obama tells a senior advisor that "it creates an inflection point. It puts this war on a path to end." Then there's Obama the Prophet. When no one else even conceived such a thing, he intuits, after a brief visit to India, that the Hindu fundamentalist BJP will soon take power; while, before the protests presaging the Arab Spring even start up, he pretends to have divined that "sometime, somewhere, things are going to blow" (only a flaming gascon could construe this throwaway line as proof of

prophetic powers). Curiously, where one might expect he would be knowledgeable, Obama's clueless. His mother worked in Indonesia, he lived there, yet he refers to the C.I.A.-backed military coup that "toppled a *Communist* government in Indonesia in 1965" (my emphasis). If he even got this wrong, then, really, what *does* he know? At one point, Obama's "body man," Reggie Love, asked the Oval Office's *Mr. Wizard* what caused the Ming dynasty's demise. "Internal strife," Obama replied. "Power struggles, corruption, peasants starving 'cause the rich got greedy or just didn't care." The reader hopes against hope that Reggie would, finally, summon the courage to fire back: "I ain't one of your lickspittle honkies! Cut this shit out already, Barack, you don't know what the fuck you're talking about!" To be sure, Obama does at one point concede that he's a mite less knowledgeable than his secretary of energy, "a Nobel-prize-winning physicist from Stanford."[466]

If Obama's pretensions cross the threshold of (unintended) self-parody, it's when he dons the economist's cap. A political science major in college, he took a handful of basic economics courses. Right after graduation, he copyedited and collated raw data for an obscure economics newsletter for a year.[467] Although that's the long and short of his tutelage and experience in economics, Obama puts himself across in *Promised Land* as a maven in the discipline. He mocks Republican presidential nominee John McCain's "spotty knowledge of the details of the financial crisis"; purports to be "familiar enough with John Maynard Keynes"; dismisses "outside economists" who question the wisdom of his economic policy, and also the author of a compelling insider critique of the bank bailouts as knowing "little about finance";

commends British prime minister Gordon Brown as he "understood global finance," and Chinese premier Wen Jiabao as he "displayed a sophisticated grasp of the currency crisis"; bemoans that, as Prime Minister Cameron "hewed closely to free-market orthodoxy,… predictably, the British economy would fall deeper into a recession," while "the stubborn embrace of austerity by key European leaders, despite all of the contrary evidence, was more than a little frustrating"; worries that "Greece might have no alternative but to pull out of the currency compact, an unprecedented move with uncertain economic ramifications"; defends "derivatives" as "all sorts of companies used them to hedge their risk against big swings in currency or commodity prices." He sprinkles the text with jaunty, insider lingo and bandies about knowing phrases. Banks "go belly-up" and "were hemorrhaging capital," investors "yanked capital out" of risky investments, defaults are "spiking," businesses "decided to retrench," the economy was passing through a "classic cycle of contracting demand," money market funds "were now starting to buckle," "capital markets" are "skittish," investment banks "underwrit[e] high-flying securities."[468] Then Obama throws in long, fluff passages transparently designed to bedazzle the reader with his fluency in the subject matter. It can't but be wondered, however, whether Obama possesses even an addled jumble of a notion what he's talking about in these soliloquies, or—what seems much more likely—he's just recycling daily briefings from his economic advisors.[469] His hubris scales dizzying heights as this twit, who, it might fairly be supposed, depends on Reggie to balance his checkbook, proceeds to lecture Europeans from on high on how to manage their

economies. Even if his prescriptions were right, he'd be the last to know it:

> It took most of the summit for me and Tim to convince the two of them [Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Nicolas Sarkozy] to join us in … calling on each G20 country to implement policies that increased aggregate demand.
>
> Tim and I had urged European leaders to take more decisive action to mend their economies. We advised them to clear up the issues with their banks once and for all (the "stress test" E.U. regulators had applied to their financial institutions was so slipshod that a pair of Irish banks needed government rescues just a few months after regulators had certified them as sound).
>
> Whenever I suggested to [Merkel] that Germany needed to set an example by spending more on infrastructure or tax cuts, she politely but firmly pushed back.
>
> Tim and I put on a full-court press to get the European Central Bank and the I.M.F. to produce a rescue package robust enough to calm the markets and allow Greece to cover its debt payments, while helping the new government set up a realistic plan to reduce the country's structural deficits and restore growth…. Once again, our European counterparts had other ideas…. Both [Merkel] and her austerity-minded finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, appeared determined to condition any assistance on an adequate penance, despite our warnings that squeezing an already battered Greek economy too hard would be counterproductive.

Merkel was Germany's chancellor for 16 years. But Obama just can't figure why she didn't defer to his expertise. She held a doctorate in quantum chemistry and put in a stint as a research scientist. But didn't Obama master "physics for poets" and put in a stint as a "community organizer"? That Merkel, such contumacity! "Without the leverage to force a permanent fix for Europe's underlying problems," Barack Hayek Obama sighs, "Tim and I had to content ourselves with having temporarily helped to defuse another bomb." Those Europeans, such lèse-majesté! Shouldn't the lot of them be credited, though, for passing the "stress test" of hearing out

this gasbag without punching him? At one point, Obama goes so far as to denigrate the counsel proffered by Geithner and Summers: "To me, their position sounded flimsy." Political correctness forbids speculating in print on the unspoken expletives attending their formal reaction.[470] These lingo-laden passages and presumptions attest, not to his virtuoso grasp but, on the contrary, that he was in a fog when it came to economics. Why does Obama make such a buffoon of himself? The obvious answer is, in order to claim ownership over the—albeit anemic—economic recovery during his administration. But Obama had as much to do with it as this writer. He just approved and then read from a teleprompter the script provided him by his economic advisors. Per a crucial decision bearing on the solvency of financial institutions, here, for example, is how Axelrod describes Obama's modus operandi:

> He summoned his economic advisers to a meeting, determined to force an answer on the banks. Despite the president's obvious frustration, Geithner, Summers, and Romer continued to argue for several hours on the path forward. Finally, the president stood up. "I'm going to get a haircut and have dinner with my family," he announced. "I'll be back at seven. When I get back, I want a consensus."… When the newly shorn president returned, the group had reached a grudging consensus.[471]

To read his memoir, Obama isn't, however, merely a certifiable genius. The former druggie and "community organizer" is now so refined, so sophisticated, so above the hoi polloi. He deplores protesters trailing George W. Bush on his last day in office, as it "seemed graceless and unnecessary" as well as a sign of the "weakening of whatever boundaries of decorum had once regulated politics," while he dismisses feminist antiwar group Code Pink as "quirky." Then he quotes Yeats as he laments that grassroots activists disappointed by the Recovery Act "lacked all conviction." Isn't it rich that this

chameleon on steroids bewails *their* irresoluteness? He describes President Sarkozy as looking "like a figure out of a Toulouse-Lautrec painting." Other than it sounding good, why this artist, only God knows. And then he quotes a portentous line from Solzhenitsyn that is a standby of every pedant.[472] When he's not enchanting readers with his refinements, Obama bestows on them his oracular broodings:

> *Of a visit to the Egyptian pyramids*
> Our guide couldn't tell me just who it was that the image [inside the pyramid] depicted, or even whether it dated back to the time of the Pyramids. But I stood at the wall for an extra beat, trying to imagine the life behind that etching. Had he been a member of the royal court? A slave? A foreman? Maybe just a bored vandal, camped out at night centuries after the wall had been built, inspired by the stars and his own loneliness to sketch his own likeness. I tried to imagine the worries and strivings that might have consumed him and the nature of the world he'd occupied, likely full of its own struggles and palace intrigues, conquests and catastrophes, events that probably at the time felt no less pressing than those I'd face as soon as I got back to Washington. All of it was forgotten now, none of it mattered, the pharaoh, the slave, and the vandal all long turned to dust.
>
> *Of America's many wars from the Civil War to Vietnam*
> Glory and tragedy, courage and stupidity—one set of truths didn't negate the other. For war was contradiction, as was the history of America.
>
> *Of the rise of anti-democratic movements*
> I found myself asking whether those impulses—of violence, greed, corruption, nationalism, racism, and religious intolerance, the all-too-human desire to beat back our own uncertainty and mortality and sense of insignificance by subordinating others—were too strong for any democracy to permanently contain. For they seemed to lie in wait everywhere, ready to resurface whenever growth rates stalled or demographics changed or a charismatic leader chose to ride the wave of people's fears and resentments.[473]

Obama's meditations bring to mind a lovely aphorism coined by Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky: "That profound mystical rumbling which sounds like thunder but is actually only a snore."

So convinced is he of the world-historic significance of his every stirring, physical and mental, that Obama includes in his memoir fine descriptions of his doodles and dreams.[474] If (perish the thought!) doubt still lingers in the reader's mind as to his extraordinariness, Obama's evocation of his mentors and precursors is manifestly designed to dispel it. He purports that "as a young man, I had learned a lot from Du Bois' writing." It's odd, then, that, even after graduating law school and already teaching at the University of Chicago, at age 34, he still didn't know how to pronounce W. E. B. Du Bois' surname.[475] He further purports that "Gandhi had profoundly influenced my thinking. As a young man, I'd studied his writings and found him giving voice to some of my deepest instincts." Was Obama channeling his inner Gandhi when he decided which of the "baseball cards" he would target for extrajudicial execution by a drone?[476] Still, it's clear that, as Obama takes the measure of himself, the gaze in his mind's eye is riveted on one particular historical figure. Lincoln. He was by broad consensus the greatest of all American presidents, so, predictably, Obama keeps dropping Lincoln's name (hint! hint!) in his memoir. Before his inauguration, "Michelle, the girls, and I flew to Philadelphia, where in homage to Lincoln's whistle-stop train ride from Springfield to Washington for his 1861 inauguration we boarded a vintage railroad car and reprised the last leg of his journey." When he visits convalescing soldiers in military hospitals, Obama "thought about Lincoln during the Civil War, his habit of wandering through makeshift infirmaries,… talking softly to soldiers…. I wondered how Lincoln had managed it, what prayers he said afterward. He must have known it was a necessary penance. A penance I, too, had to pay."[477] But what, pray tell, does Obama

have in common with Lincoln? Lincoln took an unshakeable stand on the burning issue of his day. Obama took an unshakeable stand on … himself. Lincoln led, molded, and was molded by a mass popular groundswell that permanently and profoundly transformed these United States. Obama capitalized on historical transformations which had preceded him, in which he played no part whatsoever, and of which his presidential bid was the culmination and beneficiary. True, Obama was shrewd enough to size up and seize on the historic opportunity bestowed upon him. He did not, however, create it, except, at the ripe moment, by cynically exploiting youthful idealism and energy to carry him over the top, promising "hope and change," even as, all the while—far from rising to the historic moment and realizing its transformative potentiality, per Lincoln—he set about, invested in, and never deviated from *stabilizing the status quo*, indeed, bringing to bear the fullness of his cunning to crush any challenges to it. In his oration attending the dedication of a "Freedmen's Monument in Memory of Abraham Lincoln" (1876), Frederick Douglass, even as he forthrightly recognized that Lincoln "was preeminently the white man's president, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men," had this to say about Lincoln's extraordinariness:

> Abraham Lincoln was at the head of a great movement, and was in living and earnest sympathy with that movement, which, in the nature of things, must go on until slavery should be utterly and forever abolished in the United States. … Under his wise and beneficent rule, we saw ourselves gradually lifted from the depths of slavery to the heights of liberty and manhood; under his wise and beneficent rule, and by measures approved and vigorously pressed by him, we saw that the handwriting of ages, in the form of prejudice and proscription, was rapidly fading away from the face of our whole country; under his rule, and in due time, about as soon after all as the country could tolerate the strange spectacle, we saw our brave sons and brothers laying off the rags of bondage,

> and being clothed all over in the blue uniforms of the soldiers of the United States; under his rule we saw two hundred thousand of our dark and dusky people responding to the call of Abraham Lincoln, and with muskets on their shoulders, and eagles on their buttons, timing their high footsteps to liberty and union under the national flag; under his rule we saw the independence of the black republic of Haiti, the special object of slave holding aversion and horror, fully recognized, and her minister, a colored gentleman, duly received here in the city of Washington; under his rule we saw the internal slave-trade, which so long disgraced the nation, abolished, and slavery abolished in the District of Columbia; under his rule we saw for the first time the law enforced against the foreign slave trade, and the first slave-trader hanged like any other pirate or murderer; under his rule…, we saw the Confederate States, based upon the idea that our race must be slaves, and slaves forever, battered to pieces and scattered to the four winds; under his rule, and in the fullness of time, we saw Abraham Lincoln, after giving the slave-holders three months' grace in which to save their hateful slave system, penning the immortal paper, which, though special in its language, was general in its principles and effect, making slavery forever impossible in the United States. Though we waited long, we saw all this and more.

Let Barack Obama pen ten thousand pages and more in his interminable presidential memoir. Let him babble on and on about his wondrous achievements (and wondrous family). Let us set aside their respective personal attributes, in which Obama pales so miserably by juxtaposition with Lincoln, and focus strictly on the historical ledger. Still, except in the deranged minds of a stupefying narcissist and his revolting retinue of bootlickers, how can it possibly be said of Obama that his attainments—those bereft eight years, which so disillusioned as to drive many of his erstwhile supporters into the arms of a different, more sinister, genre of madman: that this record places him, even by roughest of approximations whereby minus one is rounded off to plus one million, in a common class with Lincoln? There comes a time, this is one of them, when it must be said, out loud and however much it might cause offense or hurt: *Enough already with this bullshit!*[478]

But ultimately, Obama isn't writing for History's annals. He's writing for Hollywood's marquees. He covets the window space not in Barnes & Noble, but in Blockbuster Video.[479] He's out to impress not historian David Blight, but his buddy David Geffen. His heart palpitations accelerate not at the prospect of a Pulitzer, but of an Oscar. For *Promised Land* is best understood as the raw material for a cheesy screenplay. He's got the "O.K. Corral"[480] scene set in Copenhagen. He's got the de rigueur Holocaust scene, in which "Lights, Camera, Elie" Wiesel and the German Chancellor cross the threshold of a concentration camp alongside him:

> "If these trees could talk," Elie said softly, waving toward a row of stately oaks as the two of us and Merkel slowly walked the gravel path toward Buchenwald's main entrance. The sky was low and gray.... For the next hour, we wandered the grounds, passing guard towers and walls lined with barbed wire.... Elie spoke, describing how in 1945—paradoxically—he had emerged from the camp feeling hopeful about the future.... He wasn't so sure now that such optimism was justified, he said.... But he beseeched us, beseeched me, to leave Buchenwald with resolve, to try to bring about peace, to use the memory of what had happened on the ground where we stood to see past anger and divisions and find strength in solidarity. I carried his words with me.[481]

(I sent the full passage to a respected historian of the Nazi holocaust. After pointing out improbabilities and anomalies in the text, the historian commented: "I have to say, I wasn't expecting much enlightened thought, but was shocked how phony the two pages you sent me were.") And Obama's got the climactic final scene, his last chapter ("On the High Wire"). Oddly, the memoir ends not after he completes his first term of office, but two-and-a-half years into it when he orders the assassination of Osama bin Laden. The explanation is not, however, hard to find: Obama is not writing with a statesman's or an historian's temporal calibrations in mind; nor with an ordinary sense of proportion. Indeed, as an

historical event, bin Laden's death barely amounts to a footnote; it didn't change anything.[482] But as a cinematic spectacle, it obviously couldn't be beat. Every page of the last chapter reads as if it's already been scripted, the tension building to the denouement, the frisson:

ON THE TRACKS OF OSAMA BIN LADEN
Starring Barack Hussein Obama

The plot
"Osama bin Laden's precise whereabouts had been a mystery."

The resolve
"'I want to make the hunt for bin Laden a top priority,' I said."

The tip-off
"I absorbed the news in silence."

The dilemma
"'What's your judgment?' I asked."

The plan
"Based on what I'd heard, I decided we had enough information to begin developing options for an attack."

The prep
"I nodded. 'Let's do the homework, then.'"

The deception
"All the while, we carried on with business as usual at the White House."

The cut-away (to his beautiful family)
"Michelle and the girls were in rare form at dinner that night, teasing me relentlessly…. I hadn't told Michelle about my pending decision, not wanting to burden her…. After tucking the girls in, I retired to the Treaty Room."

The last meeting
"Back in the Situation Room the next day, my team and I conducted a final review."

The President, alone

"I told the group that they would have my decision by morning."

The point of decision
"I was clear-eyed about the stakes involved."

The countdown begins
"The grandfather clock ticked from its spot against the Treaty Room wall."

The profile in courage
"While I couldn't guarantee the outcome of my decision, I was fully prepared and fully confident in making it."

Mission Accomplished!
"'We got him,' I said softly."

The fade-out, into the sunset
"I boarded Marine One for the short ride back to the White House. I was in a quiet mood as I gazed out…. The helicopter began its gentle turn…. The Washington Monument suddenly materialized on one side, seeming almost close enough to touch; on the other side, I could see the seated figure of Lincoln, shrouded in shadow behind the memorial's curved marble columns."

And now, back in Hollywood, the winner is…[483]

* * *

Supporting Cast

They were all toadies and humbugs, but … each of them pretended not to know that the others were toadies and humbugs: because the admission that he or she did know it, would have made him or her out to be a toady and humbug.

—Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

The Czar recoiled in hostility before everything gifted and significant. He felt at ease only among completely mediocre and brainless people … to whom he did not have to look up.

—Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*

After his term of office expired, not only Obama but many in his inner circle published memoirs. To read them back-to-back is to plunge head first into the cringe-creepy world of the

Obamabots: of grovelers and groupies, Jesus Freaks and Moonies; some, to be sure, gifted, but most of them egregiously not; each asserting that his or her own intimacy with POTUS was special, on a different, rarefied level; each confessing to a degree of disillusionment by the end, but never to the point of doubting The Great Leader or His Mission. Herewith the bit players in Obama's cinematic extravaganza.

The femme infertile

Alyssa Mastromonaco was White House Deputy Chief of Staff. Her memoir's title, *Who Thought This Was a Good Idea?*, gestures to the default reply in Obama's inner circle when a *bad* idea was submitted to higher-ups or POTUS. But *entre nous*, it's also cause for wonder who thought publishing this book was a good idea. Pity her that she didn't have a true friend to forewarn her, *Alyssa, you're a superb executive secretary, but were I you I wouldn't push the envelope.* After enduring page after page after page after page per her tampons, periods, and infertility, her near-pooping and near-retching, her feline and her fanny, this reader, seated in his sturdy recliner, it being the wee hours of the morning, he couldn't but reflect, deeply, whether this was the most prudent investment of his time in the last leg of his life's journey. Maybe it's too late in the proverbial day to be cracking Wittgenstein, but *this*? Not one to leave her fate to chance, already on the second page Mastromonaco establishes that Obama is "so, so smart." Check! (But, really, how would she know?) To boot, "a brilliant orator." Check! "I truly loved working for Barack Obama … an incredibly generous, kind, and helpful boss who I felt had not only *my* best interests at heart but also the entire nation's." Check! Check! Check! (But what's with those *coy* italics?) The climax (as it were) of her stint at the White House

(that she can tell...) is said to be when POTUS burst into her office just as she was doing ... sit-ups. Instead of a reproach, POTUS teased, "Good for you." OMG, girl, for real?! And then she lets drop, gently, discreetly, nonchalantly, the tantalizing tidbit, "I had had a very personal relationship with POTUS." (Aah, but *how* personal?) When the time is upon them to part ways, devastated as she is, tears running uncontrollably down her cheeks, still, it's, for Alyssa, a sweet sorrow: even as POTUS is exiting her life, she's already found the perfect someone to replace him. Anna Wintour. Another day, another name to drop. But poor Barack, how will *he* recover?[484] (Fade out to "If You Go Away")[485]

The M.F.A. flake

Ben Rhodes was one of Obama's chief speech writers. His memoir's title, *The World as It Is*, gestures to his chastening as the vaunted idealism he and POTUS carried with them into the White House crashed up against a recalcitrant reality.[486] Rhodes, who is Jewish, received a Master of Fine Arts from N.Y.U. If that signals he might be a flake, it's not off the mark. Already on the second page of the preface, it's made painfully clear that trouble lurks ahead. Of his last trip accompanying Obama abroad, Rhodes reminisces:

> I looked out the window at one last stretch of crowds. The streets of Lima were littered with onlookers.

Littered? Later, he climbs up "a set of basement stairs that spat me out into an alley." Up-climbing a staircase that *spat* him out? (Wordsmith advisory: *spat* conveys propulsion.) Of Cuba, he writes that it

> was a layered society—an inner core that grasped onto its revolutionary legitimacy ... and a broader outer ring comprising millions of people, whose

> opportunities were embalmed by politics.

It would appear that our would-be Philip Roth has confused a cake with a donut. Walking home one night he notices that "the trees were half-empty of leaves." Is a balding scalp *half-empty* of hair? (Wordsmith advisory: *empty* correlates with a container.) When he was first offered a position to write Obama's foreign policy speeches, "I gnawed on one question: How do you write a speech for someone you don't know?" This reader also "gnawed" on a question: How do you become a speechwriter if you don't know English? (When he was hired, his brother was—just coincidentally ... —Vice-President of Fox News and soon thereafter president of CBS News.) In fact, Rhodes wasn't just your run-of-the-mill presidential speechwriter. He lays claim to a unique, cosmic affinity with Obama. He speaks of "our worldview," of their "mind meld," of "our strange moods in his last year in office"; "I knew, or could anticipate, what Obama would think on an issue." In his own memoir, Obama confirms that Rhodes' speeches "captured my voice but also channeled something more essential: my bedrock view of the world, and sometimes even my heart." Truth be told, each did hold in common with the other a "bedrock view of the world": hard-as-granite fluff, which is exactly what one might expect from two homologous flakes.[487] Before Rhodes has finished gnawing on his question, POTUS is, incredibly, consulting Mr. M.F.A. on foreign policy. When he must decide whether to dispatch more troops to Afghanistan, according to Rhodes,

> Obama called me up to the Oval Office. It was just the two of us, standing near the door, and he asked me what I thought he should do.

Gradually, Rhodes metamorphoses into Obama's doppelgänger, weighing in alongside or in lieu of him:

> I also saw the need for drone strikes.
>
> In one session that I went to with a group of foreign policy experts, we faced a litany of criticism.... After I patiently explained our approach....
>
> I was again in a chorus of advisors arguing for air strikes. Obama agreed.
>
> In meetings or videoconferences [on Iran's nuclear program], Obama would glance at me..., looking to see if I cringed or lit up at the latest report.... Obama would ask me if we could make that shift [in an agreement with Iran]. As long as we can say there's no enrichment at Fordow, I said.

It's as if, before signing N.A.F.T.A. or launching airstrikes against Yugoslavia, Bill Clinton drew on the counsel of Monica Lewinsky.[488] Indeed, as the plot thickens, the reader can't but wonder WTF is going on here. After meeting with journalists stationed in the Middle East, the pair of grosses têtes sneak off for a tête-à-tête soirée:

> He asked me to follow him back to his private dining room, where we could continue the conversation.... "Sir," I continued, with unusual formality, "this [Arab Spring] is a seismic geopolitical shift and social movement. It's taking place up here"—I held my hand up by my head—"but our actions are down here." I lowered my hand to my waist.

If he was holding his hand by his "head," and his "actions" unfolded in propinquity to his waist, and it was "seismic" ... oh no!, it can't be! (Hello Jeffrey Toobin!) Or am I confounding something? In any event, The Great Leader set Rhodes (ahem) straight:

> He paused, chewing. "I love that you care this much. But what's the line from *Lawrence of Arabia*?" he said. It was a movie we frequently quoted to each other. "'Young men make wars.... Then old men make the peace.'"

Heavy. Later, Rhodes reveals that at national security meetings he "liked to face Obama, which made it easy to make eye contact. Obama could signal a lot with his eyes." When POTUS "made eye contact with me," Rhodes ejaculates, "Obama could tell we were both thinking the same thing." (Maybe: "Mama, He's Making Eyes at Me") Then, back in the office, just the two of them, The Great Leader is

> standing up from behind his desk and directing me to sit [lie?] down on the couch. "I've got a big idea," he said. "Well," I replied, "you're the big idea guy." Sometimes, the more intense the moment, the more casual I would be with Obama in my comments.

Or Obama would summon Rhodes into the Oval Office "when he wanted to unburden his mind." Uh-oh: *couch, big idea, intense, casual, unburden*—isn't this how Harvey Weinstein ended up behind bars? But it gets worse, or better. In breathless prose, Rhodes recreates those imperishable moments during presidential trips abroad, just the two of them, alone, the others left behind. When The Great Leader points Rhodes to the cliff in Hawaii where his mother would repose while pregnant with him, suddenly

> the entire world seemed to quiet.

Indeed, you could almost hear a swallow breaking wind. Then, as The Great Leader "sipped his drink and looked out at the endless ocean," he mused

> When you spend time growing up in Jakarta like I did, and see the masses of humanity in a place like that, it makes it harder for you to think purely of yourself.

Boy oh boy, did Obama ever clear that hurdle with flying colors![489] (When Rhodes himself goes into deep-muse mode, it's as if porridge is tooting its horn.[490]) Then, Rhodes recalls

those moments of giddy euphoria when The Great Leader struts on stage:

> As he started into his speech, I realized that the words he spoke would not be as powerful as the image of him.... This was the gift and the struggle of working for Obama.

When The Great Leader spoke abroad, "people didn't just see Obama but felt seen by him." Historian Joachim Fest recalled the quasi-erotic current between Hitler and the crowd —"the orgiastic collective delirium"— during his speeches.[491] It's hard to know what's going on inside Obama when he speaks. But Fest's aperçu does perfectly capture Rhodes: whenever The Great Leader utters forth, Rhodes erupts in consecutive convulsions of catatonic, concussive, cascading, lava-like, smoldering, white-hot, gooey ecstasy. Here's the slobbering spittoon prostrate in front of his television as Obama approaches the climax of his Amazing Grace speech:

> Obama stopped talking and put his head down. I stared at the television. He paused for what felt like an eternity.... It felt as though he'd reached the end of one kind of speech, a particularly good one, but something was not yet fully expressed. Then something changed in his face—a face I had stared at and studied across a thousand meetings, a face I had learned to read so I could understand what he was thinking, or what he wanted me to do. I saw the faintest hint of a smile

Hymns! Elmer's voice was made for hymns. He rolled them out like a negro.

...

Ishuah Rogers was dead, and they were holding his funeral at the Methodist Church.... Old J. F. Whittlesey was shaken by Ishuah's death. They had been boys together, young men together, neighbors on the farm, and in his last years... He was in the front row at the church.... He listened to Elmer, who, his eyes almost filled at the drama of the church full of people mourning their old friend, lulled them with Revelation's triumphant song: These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God ... and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. *They sang, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," and Elmer led the singing, while old Whittlesey tried to pipe up with them. They filed past the coffin. When Whittlesey had this last moment's glimpse of Ishuah's sunken face, his dry eyes were*

> and a slight shake of the head as he looked down at the lectern, a letting go, a man who looked unburdened. *He's going to sing*, I thought. "*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound….*" [Obama was] totally open in a way that I had almost never seen him be in public before. It was always hard to explain what it was that I most admired about this complicated man. Watching him, I felt that I would never have to explain it to anyone again. He then started reciting the list, punctuated by organ chords, of the names of every one of the victims, a stratagem that managed to do something I had never seen before, as the entire life of each person was celebrated, vindicated, and elevated by the short, declarative words that he spoke: Clementa Pinckney found that grace. Cynthia Hurd found that grace.... (emphases in original)
>
> *blind, and he staggered. Elmer caught him with his great arms, and whispered, "He has gone to his glory, to his great reward! Don't let's sorrow for him!" In Elmer's confident strength old Whittlesey found reassurance. He clung to him, muttering, "God bless you, Brother," before he hobbled out.*

Now, it might come off as awfully picayune, and truly I do respect the solemnity of the occasion, and truly I do empathize as Rhodes must have been deliriously overheated, sweating bullets, vibrating uncontrollably as he himself was "letting go" when he wrote this, but, for crying out loud, can't this nincompoop even use *stratagem*—"a plan or scheme intended to outwit an opponent" (O.E.D.)—correctly? In the meanwhile, when he's not reliving his late-night trysts with The Great Leader in the Oval and at exotic hideaways, or the multiple paroxysms of exquisite beatitude he experienced as he took in The Great Leader … delivering a speech, this inexhaustible lickspittle is lauding The Great Leader's "unique approach to comedy—he'd sometimes laugh at jokes he read." (Did Rhodes ever watch a Johnny Carson monologue?) Then The Great Leader's brilliance: "the guy with an answer for everything." (Before or after Googling?) Then, "his campaign swagger, a looseness in his body language, like an athlete who'd just finished a game." (*… swagger … looseness … body … athlete … game … locker room … cold shower … sauna … steam room*

… lights out … us?) And then, alack and alas, comes the pathos, the irreconcilable grief, the horror of it all, as inexorable fate closes in on these star-crossed lovers. After The Great Leader speaks at the 2016 Democratic Party convention,

> I felt a tug of nostalgia. Obama was receding as a figure; soon he—and I—would exit the stage.[492]

(Fade out to "If I Only Had a Brain")[493]

The preppie dork

David Litt was another of Obama's chief speechwriters. The son of a Jewish doctor (so what else is new?), he attended the exclusive Dalton School on the Upper East Side in Manhattan and then Yale University. He's a wonderfully witty stylist, a sure-handed master of the simile and metaphor. (Although he leans heavily on references to popular culture, which went over this writer's head, what could be accessed was good, very good.)[494] On the other hand, even as Litt adopts a self-effacing, self-deprecating, somewhat bumbling, persona in the memoir, which is presumably designed to ingratiate himself with the reader, and even as he depicts himself as just one among the many in the "army [that] had arisen, a zombie horde craving hope and change," still, springing as this preppie does from the Jewish Upper East Side, he's almost certainly an insufferable snoot. Further, it can't be lost on Litt that, when it comes to the smarts department, whereas he himself fits snugly in the first tier, Obama just doesn't cut the mustard. To be sure, even if Obama did pass muster, Litt would be congenitally incapable of registering it. In the Jewish milieu in which he, Remnick et al. grew up, the intellectual endowment of the cleverest *Schwartze* in the nature of things falls short of the dumbest

Jew; a Black student attending Dalton or Yale is perforce a diversity token. But Litt must publicly acknowledge Obama's brilliance or he's yesterday's toast in Obamaworld. In the immortal slogan of the Act-Up movement, Silence=Death; it would be an irredeemable faux pas, nay, a scandale!, as if referring to he/him at Martha's Vineyard when the homx sapien was so *obviously* they/them. This struggle in Litt's riven soul plays out in the pages of his memoir: How to pay deference to Obama's genius, even as he just can't bring himself to believe in it? He is, in this aspect, a callow, flawed courtier, insufficiently gung-ho to propitiate his god. The result verges on unintended comedy. Straining to be true to himself while still summoning forth the magic words (or else), Litt keeps handing out awards to Obama that befit graduation day at a mentally-challenged school. Thus he recalls being present at the White House Correspondents' Dinner comedy-night, when

> I watched President Obama's monologue, the best he had ever delivered.

Later he reports that

> POTUS's timing—already good to begin with—grew better every year.

Then he heaps encomia on POTUS's impromptu asides:

> the president would deliver something on the fly and, nine times out of ten, the crowd would break into applause.

But does such an eulogium do proper homage to Obama's office? He's POTUS, a would-be Lincoln, no less, not Groucho Marx or Jimmy Fallon. Strike one![495]

Agonizingly cognizant that he isn't yet home free, Litt takes another tack. He revisits the occasion when POTUS had to deliver a Passover message. The script from which he is

supposed to read, written by Litt, incorporated a line from the Haggadah, "In every generation, there are those who have tried to destroy the Jewish people." This line, Obama grimaced, was too lachrymose for a festive occasion. Here's what happened next:

> "Look, just—does anyone have a pen?" I had never heard of POTUS rewriting anything on the spot before. I would never hear of it again. But there, pen in hand, he scrawled something on the draft I had printed.... Standing from his chair, he stalked over to the laptop.... With his notes in front of him, the president extended his fingers like he was about to conduct a symphony. Then, pecking deliberately, he made his edits....
>
> **In every generation, there are those who have targeted the Jewish people for harm.**
>
> I was both embarrassed and impressed. POTUS recognized that my script might, unintentionally, cause controversy. In just five minutes, he rewrote it to express the same idea, but in far more measured tones....
> *This,* I thought, *is why he gets to be the president.* (emphasis in original)

Must I be the bearer of bad news? Inserting the preposition "for" destroys the rhythm, retards the propulsive force, of the line, while "harm" comes off as a mealy-mouthed anticlimax after "targeted." Maybe, if he felt driven to fiddle with Jewish liturgy—should a goy be doing that?—Obama could've simply said

> **In every generation, there are those who have targeted the Jewish people.**

But his rewrite frankly sucks. Even if it didn't, does editing a handful of words in a jiff demonstrate that Obama is presidential timber? Maybe if you were elected president of your second grade class, but *President of the United States*? Damn, Litt thought he could claim his own Amazing Grace moment, but he screwed up again. Strike two!

Not one to easily concede defeat (he *is* a Dalton graduate), Litt regales readers with yet another occasion when Obama

revealed his genius. The duo were rehearsing for Obama's next appearance at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. On the first take, both flubbed their lines. On the second take, luckless Litt botched his delivery again. But hold your breath —

> This made what happened next all the more remarkable. I hadn't taken my eyes off President Obama. I knew for a fact he had not practiced. And yet the difference between his first and second read-throughs was the difference between a guy puffing through kickboxing class and Jean-Claude Van Damme. He took beats at just the right moments. He hit the precise words to sell each punch line best. His tone was the perfect blend of annoyance and self-regard. It was as if he'd spent a full day rehearsing. It was that much better.
>
> I'd often heard senior staff describe President Obama as the smartest guy in the room, but only now did I realize what they meant. He didn't speak seven languages or know the Latin names of species or multiply large numbers in his head. What he did, more quickly than anyone, was strip away complicated issues to their essence and make the most of the information obtained. No one was better at getting to the point.

Uh-oh, Litt, you've done it now! Even if Obama had been voted "most likely to improve delivery of a comedy line on a second read-through," it doesn't exactly place him in Mensa company. But it's that last paragraph. *Quelle catastrophe!* It's a total non-sequitur. What, pray tell, does delivering a comedy line have to do with being "the smartest guy in the room"? How does it manifest an ability to "strip away complicated issues to their essence and make the most of the information obtained"? Litt obviously just threw it in because the clock was ticking and he still hadn't passed the fateful Obamabot test. (Incidentally, even were it true—or, as Litt elsewhere describes it, "the president's extraordinary ability to read a policy memo"—that's hardly the stuff of genius.) And then, then, that sacrilegious sentence. Jesus X. Yahweh! Obama doesn't

speak..., he doesn't know..., he can't multiply.... It's practically screaming off the page in strobe lights:

ObaMa's a SCHWARTZE!

Strike 3! You're out, out, out! *No! No! No! I beg you! I beseech you, I'm on my hands and knees! I'm lying prostrate, arms extended in supplication! Forgive me, oh Obamabots, my sins!* The internal struggle is over as Litt, finally, at last, succumbs to his inner-sycophant voice. (He wouldn't be the first Dalton grad to cave in.) He forces it out, right there in black and white, no caveats, no mincing words:

> POTUS was brilliant.

Mission accomplished! But then Litt immediately throws in, "He was talented," as in

> POTUS was brilliant. He was talented.

What a comedown! Doesn't Litt get that he's just committed bloody murder on "brilliant"? Who isn't "talented"? It was the proverbial damning with faint praise. It's as if being told your prospective date has a "nice personality." The guy can't leave well enough alone, he just doesn't know when to shut up, he's hopeless, an Obamabot manqué. Or is it that, deep down an Obama-skeptic, he couldn't hold back from caveating his praise? Too clever by half, his heart divided against itself, the more Litt goes along, the less he gets along. Small wonder, then, that he's not even fleetingly mentioned in *any* of the other Obamabot memoirs.[496]

(Fade out to "Trouble of the World")[497]

The Bodyguard and the Body Man

Only a handful of Blacks managed to gain entry into POTUS's charmed circle. Valerie Jarrett and Reggie Love figured among the chosen.[498] Jarrett issued forth from a distinguished Black pedigree, well, sort of. She is a literal exemplar of the one-drop rule. When Jarrett's daughter was born, "having looked only at me, the administrator had mistakenly written that her race was white—just as my mother's birth certificate had." (Her grandmother was "fair-skinned with dead-straight hair.") Judging from family photos, prior to DNA testing, Jarrett's family line could probably have joined the K.K.K. without raising an eyebrow. Although a gifted physician, her father had to take a career detour via Iran (where Valerie was born) in order to finally land an appointment in the racist U.S. medical establishment. After attending Stanford as an undergraduate and then University of Michigan Law School, it would appear Valerie emerged a highly competent and conscientious professional, but also devoid of principle and ruthless in her pursuit of earthly success—in other words, she was no different from her white bourgeois peers. (She reports having participated in only "one" student rally, opposing apartheid.)[499] Enervated by corporate law, Jarrett decided to pursue what she unironically denotes "public service." She gradually maneuvered her way to the top in the notoriously corrupt Chicago political machine when Richard M. Daley—whose praises Jarrett unstintingly sings—was mayor. Jarrett first served as his Deputy Chief of Staff, then Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, and then Chair of the Board of the Chicago Transit Authority. Moving to the public-private sector, she presided over not slum clearance but, instead, slum creation.[500] In the meanwhile, Jarrett sat, often simultaneously,

on almost every prestigious board in Chicago: Chair of the University of Chicago Medical Center, Vice-chair of the University of Chicago Board of Trustees, Chair of the Chicago Stock Exchange. If Obama was the Black mascot of Wall Street, Jarrett was the Black mascot of Chicago's Gold Coast. As fortune would have it, while working at a Chicago law firm, she recruited Michelle Robinson, soon-to-be Michelle Obama. Jarrett fast became an intimate family friend and, poised at the nexus of Chicago's Black elite, a key fundraiser once Obama entered politics. She followed him to the White House where she was formally a senior advisor. Fiercely protective of her boss (and Michelle), Jarrett recast her job description so as full-time to run interference for him. One gathers that she presided over Obama's staff with as subtle a touch as Ilse Koch. Litt describes her at their introduction as "warm and friendly, albeit in an official, don't-forget-I could-squash-you sort of way." Obama's campaign strategist, David Axelrod, who doesn't attempt to disguise his disdain of her, recalls Jarrett's reputation as a "tenacious, bureaucratic infighter."[501] If one can judge a person by the company they keep and admire, then Jarrett almost embarrassingly reveals her hand. In her memoir, she singles out, of all people, Al Sharpton, a.k.a. *Reverend Al*, for special praise:

> He and I developed a relationship while navigating numerous tricky and sensitive situations, and I came to find his advice and counsel extraordinarily helpful in both of Barack's presidential campaigns and throughout the eight years I worked in the White House.[502]

Indeed, scholar Adolph Reed recently found himself navigating one of those "tricky and sensitive situations" with Reverend Al. While Reed was being interviewed on a podcast, his interlocutor paused to play a video clip of Sharpton

speaking. “Hold on, I need to check my credit card,” a mock-agitated Reed declared, “Sharpton can probably find a way to get to it through the clip.”[503] In her memoir, Jarrett encapsulates her life as a struggle to “find my voice.” Blessedly, she succeeded. It’s a perfect match to her complexion, and in perfect pitch with Obama’s: not an Oreo cookie but, *au contraire*, a talking vanilla wafer. It was odd already that so few Blacks would have the ear of The First Black President. Odder still, Jarrett was one of these few. Did it make a difference to Black people? In his *Politics*, Aristotle denotes a hand severed from the body a “hand in name only,” as it “no longer has the capacity and the function which define it.” Mutatis mutandis, it might be said that Jarrett was Black “in name only.” When female White House staffers groused about their shabby treatment from Alpha male colleagues, Jarrett, a crusading feminist, seized the initiative to convene a “speak bitterness” meeting with Obama. If she never convened a comparable meeting of Black staffers, it’s perhaps because there weren’t enough of them to comprise a quorum. Even as Jarrett, conspicuously, bestowed acts of kindness upon her needy Black assistant, the gestures bore more in common with noblesse oblige than Black solidarity. For the simple fact is, neither her moral nor her material universe included the unwashed Black masses. At the end of his life, Du Bois bemoaned the “Negro intelligentsia” that was emerging from the Civil Rights Movement, of which Jarrett is an ideal type. She benefited from—in Du Bois’ words—“the loosening of outer racial discriminatory pressures,” and this “partial emancipation” freed her up “to ape the worst of American and Anglo-Saxon chauvinism, luxury, showing-off and ‘social climbing.’”[504] Does it surprise that Jarrett keeps reminding the

reader that her favorite vacation spot is Martha's Vineyard?[505] True, on a grander scale, Jarrett's ascension to the peak of power and privilege lessened the "disparity" in the one percent as the "haves" henceforth included one more (technically) Black face. But, besides putting an enlightened gloss on these vampires, and kindling the hope in less fortunate Blacks that *Yes, you can … one day suck blood for a living*, it's hard to figure how Jarrett's achievement or, for that matter, Obama's, advanced anyone's agenda save their own.

(Fade out to "White Christmas")[506]

Reggie Love was Obama's "body man"—in other words, POTUS's all-purpose gofer. If Obama suddenly craved a particular dish, call Reggie; if he needed a new pair of shoes on the fly, ask Reggie. Love also worked out with Obama in the early mornings and, at every opportunity, they would go shoot hoops together. Although Love's memoir is predictably worshipful of Obama—including the de rigueur "everyone knows the man is brilliant"—still, to the reader's relief, he devotes a large portion of it, not to groveling praise, but instead to showcasing his own prowess. A talented athlete, Love played football and basketball at Duke University, where he majored in political science and public policy. When he first volunteered in an Indiana political campaign, Love happily recalls, he and the candidate "talked sports, but more often I was drawn into conversations about social policy, day care, minimum wage, health insurance, the effect of daylight saving time on livestock." Once he joined the White House staff, Love would, on his own time, bone up on the background to pressing current events:

> Reading the daily briefing book was my favorite part of the job. I learned so much. It was like going to college and majoring in everything. Economic reports, issues for advocacy groups, background on members of Congress ... —I literally sat at the information hub of the world. The President would arrive at the Oval Office around 8:30 or 9:00 a.m., after which there would be a PDB, "Presidential Daily Briefing," given by the national security team. As he was being briefed, usually his next appointment would be milling around the outer Oval, which meant milling around near my office. While they waited, I'd ask the financial experts what they thought was going to happen—how was the economy doing and why, what did they think the job numbers were going to be, were we seeing growth, what was the GDP? I'd talk to the military guys about Iraq. I'd talk to the legislative team about what was happening with the health care bill. It was a tremendous opportunity, and I seized it. Instead of sitting idly by and saying nothing, I used that time to educate myself about what was unfolding in the world.
>
> I only understood a fraction of what was being talked about in the rooms where I stood.... It would have been simpler to just tune out, but I was curious.... I was turning myself into a human search engine.

Love attended the "Princeton of the South" (Duke), where he studied politics; while in the White House, he evinced a deep interest in politics, and he was one of the few Blacks in Obama's immediate entourage. One might have thought that The First Black President would encourage him. But, even as Love sedulously primed himself beforehand on the "off chance" (!) POTUS would question him on a matter of substance, Obama only shot the breeze or talked sports with his "body man"; he reserved heavy, high-minded conversation for pinheads like Rhodes, whom Obama even consulted when deciding policy. If Love's ego survived his White House years intact, it couldn't have been owing to Obama's nurturing. As the end of POTUS's second term of office approached, Love contemplated an early departure so as to concentrate on his graduate studies. Fearful of disappointing POTUS by abandoning ship, he only gradually works up the courage to announce his decision:

> "I need to go to grad school because I don't want people to say ten years from now that the only reason I am where I am is because I worked for Barack Obama," I blurted.
> "You're never going to get away from that," the President said.
> "Yeah, I know, but I need to have other credentials for people to take me seriously."

(Obama only came around to supporting the decision after Love made clear his mind was made up.) *Don't waste your time, Reggie, you'll always live in my shadow.* Yes, he can, Yes, he can, Yes, Obama can ... be a racist, narcissistic douche.[507]

(Fade out to "I Will Survive")[508]

The Pyromaniacal Humanitarian

Samantha Power was the self-styled public conscience of the Obama administration. In his memoir, Obama recalls enlisting her as she "evoked my own youthful idealism, the part of me still untouched by cynicism, cold calculation, or caution dressed up as wisdom." Indeed, so pristine was Power's goodness that "she drove me nuts."[509] If the title of her own memoir, *The Education of an Idealist*,[510] hints at her chastening while in Washington, still, Power avers that she's not fundamentally changed. She does acknowledge, however, having made "many concessions ... to immutable realities," and, by the time of her mortifying Senate testimony to gain confirmation as U.S. ambassador to the U.N., "I had lost my innocence."[511] In large part, her memoir fits the saccharine mold of the others. She imagines herself to be a do-gooder, her heart affixed on her lapel, ever (if selectively) bleeding. She

Not even the nights when they worked together, alone in the church, were more thrilling than their swift mocking kisses between the calls of solemn parishioners. To be able to dash across the study and kiss her soft temple after a lugubrious widow had waddled out, and to have her whisper, "Darling, you were too wonderful with that awful old hen; oh, you are so dear!"—that was life to him.

regales the reader with her pillow talk and swapping of sweet-nothings with POTUS.[512] Did she also drive his nuts nuts? Freud, it will be recalled, posits that as civilization progresses, the web of social relations becomes more intricate and, in order to avert a fraying of this dense social fabric, civilization thwarts the natural consummation of our libidinal impulses in a lover, as it instead converts and redirects the libido—what he denotes "aim-inhibited libido"[513]—outward so as to strengthen the communal bond by feelings of friendship. It can't be said from this vantage point if all the libidinal energy in the Obama White House was "inhibited," but it is certain that a turbocharged quasi-erotic bond was forged between POTUS and his acolytes, not unlike the entanglement between cult leader Charles Manson and his "girls." It's clear, for example, that Power had—to borrow Mastromonaco's phrase—a "very personal relationship with POTUS." In a lush page-and-a-half introduction of her to his readers, Obama affectionately describes Power as "younger than I'd expected, in her mid-thirties, tall and gangly, with red hair, freckles, and big, thickly lashed, almost sorrowful eyes that crinkled at the corners when she laughed." (He gestures to Rhodes in the same hot breath while describing Power, as they both appealed to that same "youthful idealism … side of me."[514]) Also, Power fits right in with Team Obama. She makes clear that she holds Obama in the highest esteem but, thankfully, she's not quite so demonstratively fawning. A bird of rare plumage, she stints her praise by not extolling his brilliance. Still, a chip off the Obama block, Power is an avid athlete, although her preferred spectator sport is baseball, not basketball. Like *A Promised Land*, Power's memoir cuts away every few pages to her family: her husband, Cass Sunstein (an

academic), and two children, Declan and Rian. There are fully 69 separate page references just to Declan. Power exposes at regular intervals her anxiety at not spending sufficient time with her toddlers. It's unclear, however, why she chooses to expatiate on these concerns. She doesn't even rise to an insignificant political figure, while her insights into the human condition do not rise above the pedestrian; nor is she an engrossing or a learned writer (there's the predictable liberal-minded reference to Niebuhr here and Camus there). Her cutesy anecdotes about her children fall, like Obama's, into the "I-guess-you-had-to-be-there" category.[515] Couldn't Power simply have left it at: *I loved my children to death, and like all working moms, felt guilt-ridden not spending more time with them*? Incidentally, she also graphically describes the callings of the flesh while raising her kids. Here's what transpired after Obama, Hillary Clinton and Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi asked Power to go outside so they could talk privately:

> I was immensely relieved for an excuse to leave the room—I had not had time to pump for hours and had grown increasingly uncomfortable as the meeting went on. I raced out to the armored vehicle where I had left my pump and asked to be directed to the nearest restroom, which was ... across the hall from the study where Obama, Clinton, and she were still talking. I perched myself on the closed lid of the toilet, assembled the breast pump, and then attached the suction cups first to a pair of small bottles and then to myself. When I turned on the pump, it began its loud, rhythmic, blare: HEEEE-HAWWWW. HEEEE-HAWWWW. HEEE-HAWWWW. Initially, I was self-conscious about the noise, wondering if Obama, Clinton, and Suu Kyi might be able to hear it. But a large press pool from all over the world was milling outside, creating a din that I was confident would drown out other sounds. Because I found it uncomfortable to pump, I had always disliked it. And if I didn't produce as much milk as usual, I felt like a failure. But on that day, in part because it had been so long since I had last pumped, the milk flowed freely.... At one point, I thought I heard the chatter of the media die down, so I assumed that Obama and Suu Kyi were about to begin their press conference. I leaned over toward the window in the bathroom, which was beside the toilet, and pulled back one

> of the curtains to see if this was the case. To my surprise and horror, the window looked directly out onto the porch where the two leaders were already making statements to the cameras. Had I unwittingly drawn the curtain a few inches wider, I would have exposed myself to the world.[516]

It might be observed that a Hillary Clinton or Madeleine Albright would almost certainly not have included such titillating passages. Which is to say, the thought does occur that, if Power includes them, it's in part because she's semi-pulchritudinous and manifestly not above parlaying this asset of hers. No doubt, Power would justify what could otherwise be construed as vulgar exhibitionism feeding off voyeurism by declaring hers is a "women's" book. But then, shouldn't Jeffrey Toobin get to chronicle in his "men's" book the callings of *his* flesh while in attendance at *New Yorker* staff meetings? I dare say—Oh, Goddesses of Political Correctness and Cancel Culture, forgive me!—that not every episode of one's private life, neither lactation nor masturbation, is appropriate subject-matter for a political memoir. If Power rushed into the bathroom and shut the door behind her, wasn't that because discretion and tact so dictated?

It must, however, be said that Power's book is not just fluff; a large part of it pretends to be serious and substantial. True, it is a professional memoir, so a lot of space is given over to silly self-promotion. Power has a knack for contriving self-serving wacky world records. Of actions she spearheaded against Libya's Qaddafi, culminating in a condemnatory U.N. resolution, she writes: "When it passed in such record speed, I thought it was probably the best example in history of governments hastily using a vast array of 'tools in the tool box' to try to deter atrocities." After the subsequent military action taken against Libya, she described it as "the fastest and broadest international response to an impending human

rights crisis in history." Of a Security Council resolution she crafted on fighting Ebola, Power writes that it garnered "the largest number of cosponsors for any Security Council resolution in the sixty-nine-year history of the U.N." Of her engagement in the Central African Republic, Power brags that "our actions led some to claim that we helped avert a genocide." It's gratifying to learn that, at any rate, Cass, Declan, and Rian—the "some"?— appreciate her labors.[517] Nonetheless, Power also provides ample material on which to judge whether the image she projects of herself—an intrepid, principled, courageous defender of human rights—withstands scrutiny. The short answer is: it doesn't; it's not even a close call. Power first became engaged in human rights issues while attending Yale University. Her beloved mentors were solidly establishment figures—Morton Abramowitz, Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the blood-soaked Reagan administration; Richard Holbrooke, President Carter's point man during the U.S.-backed Indonesian genocide in East Timor—who staunchly defended human rights everywhere, but only so long as this pursuit aggrandized or, at any rate, didn't undercut American interests. Power herself seems not to have ever doubted the essential goodness of the United States.[518] Although the scholarly literature on U.S. human rights crimes around the world could probably fill several stacks in her undergraduate library, they're closed books to Power. She is blissfully ensconced in a bubble in which the U.S. holds aloft the banner of human rights, while victims abroad defer to and plead for Washington's leadership. Her worldview echoes that laid out by Obama in his Nobel laureate speech, which she helped draft: "Whatever mistakes we have made," America is a unique force for good in the

world, that doesn't "seek to impose our will" but, on the contrary, to provide a "better future for our children and grandchildren" as well as "others' children and grandchildren," so that we all can live in "freedom and prosperity." *And they all lived happily ever after.*[519] Her book contains a few fleeting references to the U.S. wars in Southeast Asia that, she observes in passing, "ultimately killed millions of people." She is apparently of the opinion that it was a story of U.S. good intentions gone awry and, anyhow, it's all been forgiven and forgotten as these countries are now "fiercely pro-American."[520] The only episode from those nightmare years that still wracks her conscience is—surprise! surprise!—Pol Pot's killing fields. The U.S. wars in Central America during the Reagan administration don't earn passing mention even as some 200,000 people were killed. Indeed, the Washington-backed Rios Montt regime committed "acts of genocide" (Guatemala Truth Commission) against the indigenous Mayan population (Reagan notoriously rose to the defense of Montt, declaring that the genocidal murderer had been given a "bad rap"). One of the architects of those wars, Jeane Kirkpatrick, does rate several mentions in Power's memoir—not as a mass murderer, however, but as a feisty interlocutor who had to suffer the "constant sexism" of her male colleagues; in other words, poor Jeane, another martyr on the altar of patriarchy. To be sure, Power does drop the aside that she had "vast policy differences" with Kirkpatrick. Is support or not for genocide a "policy difference"?[521] If Power has a beef with U.S. foreign policy, it's not because we have committed human rights crimes but, rather, because we don't do enough to prevent them, which was the subject of her Pulitzer-prize-winning book, "*A Problem from Hell.*" (Her book

couldn't find a publisher until *New Republic* owner and editor Martin Peretz decided to put it out. If ever there were "A Problem from Hell," it was the Israel-loving/Arab-hating Peretz.) In her early 20s, Power reported for about two years from war zones in the Balkans. Like Obama the "community organizer," Power has parlayed this brief stint in the "heart of darkness" to establish her street cred. (She reports one brush with death when, on a perilous road, the vehicle she and *New York Times* editor Roger Cohen were driving careened out of control. Wherever Power finds herself, she seems always to hook up with an "important" person.) She fairly rapidly reinvented herself as the nemesis of and authority on International Perps of Evil. Put otherwise, Power is the DC comics' "Justice League of America"[522] rolled up into her person, or "The Girl from U.N.C.L.E." (coincidentally, played by actress Stephanie Powers!) ever doing battle with THRUSH.[523] In his first term of office, Obama appointed Power to the National Security Council, where she served as "Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights," while in his second term, Obama appointed her U.S. ambassador to the U.N. In her memoir, Power exhaustively chronicles the thousand and one noble causes she championed and how much better a place the world was after her eight years of heroic service.[524] It would be peevish to gainsay that certain of her undertakings did make the world a better place. But the questions to ponder are of a different order. *First*, Power prides herself, and has been praised by Obamaworld, for her moral *courage*, her personal *integrity* and her beholdenness to *principle*. It's not immediately obvious how one measures such attributes. Julien Benda famously posited that the more unconditionally one

embraces the spiritual values of Truth and Justice, the less one can expect to enjoy the material rewards of Fortune and Fame.[525] A schema corresponding to ordinary intuitions goes something like this: The great apostles of Truth and Justice—Socrates, Gandhi, King, or Mandela—are synonymous with courage, integrity and principle while, in their defense of Truth and Justice, each perforce forfeited earthly reward; the more they persevered in defense of Truth and Justice, the more courage, integrity, and principle they demonstrated, and the more material benefits they forfeited; Socrates, Gandhi and King having paid the ultimate terrestrial price, life itself, while Mandela languished in jail for 27 years. The proof of one's morality, then, is a willingness to make *sacrifices* beyond sheer expenditure of physical energy (for sure, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney didn't lack in a work ethic). To test Power's moral pretenses, a simple question might be posed: *What price did Power pay, what losses did she suffer, in her pursuit of human rights around the world?* If she consistently carved out a path such that it cost her nothing, or that even grew her earthly capital, it could scarcely be said of Power that she was a paragon of political virtue. The human rights community is awash with careerists who righteously pose and preen for the cameras while they carefully calibrate the line of least resistance; it's not for nothing that the International Criminal Court is widely mocked as the International C*aucasian* Court, as it has only prosecuted African leaders. *Second*, even as Power undoubtedly did some good, this quantum must be weighed against the quantum of evil she has perpetrated, if a proper balance-sheet of her professional record is to be reckoned. If, for example, she was culpable of multiple egregious deeds of commission (or omission), it would be hard

to reckon Power a force for good, and it might even so tilt the scale as to place her squarely in the evil category. In her memoir, Power recalls both her micro—personal—initiatives and her macro—broad policy—initiatives. Among her micro initiatives, two stand out: defense of political dissidents and pursuit of war criminals.

- *Defense of political dissidents.* Not one, she says, to shy away from confronting evil, Power pressed the Cuban Foreign Minister at the U.N. to allow for an independent investigation into the death of a Cuban dissident. The cause was just, no doubt, but it required as much moral courage as the Cuban Foreign Minister pressing Power to allow for an independent investigation into the death of Eric Garner. In the same vein, she takes enormous pride in her and Obama's denunciation of anti-LGBT bigotry abroad. Of one such Obama statement, Power breathlessly recalls, "For a head of state—and not just any head of state, but the President of the United States—to denounce the killing of a gay activist abroad was unheard of." Another noble cause, for sure, but her and Obama's championing of it required as much moral courage as Saudi King Salman denouncing Islamophobia in the West. She is in awe that Obama "would raise LGBT rights standing next to the very African leaders who ridiculed them." Did she suppose that one of those savages would devour him alive?[526] Power also delights in recalling her campaign at the U.N. to free 20 female political prisoners around the world. Of the 20, only one was being held by a major U.S. ally. In nauseating testament to her unconscious cynicism, Power

practically boasts that she only threw in the Egyptian political prisoner as it "made our stance on human rights more credible."[527] If Power were so indignant at the persecution of political dissidents, and if, as Power proclaims, she used every tool in her toolbox to defend individuals persecuted "for 'crimes' like exposing officials' lawbreaking," then it might be supposed that she would denounce from the rafters her own government's persecution of Edward Snowden and Julian Assange. But then, notwithstanding those crinkles at the corners of her eyes when she laughed, Power wouldn't have been POTUS's pick for U.N. ambassador, would she?[528]

- *Pursuit of war criminals.* No less appalled by the impunity afforded war criminals, Power set out on a righteous path to avenge this outrage. She riveted her sights on Ratko Mladic, "mastermind of the Srebrenica genocide," and proudly reports that, due in no small part to her prodding, "after fifteen years on the run, one of the world's most notorious war criminals was behind bars."[529] But if Power was so enraged by the impunity of war criminals, she didn't have to track them down far away in the Balkans. In fact, she could choose from a veritable *embarras de richesses* right here at home. What's more, one world-class war criminal could, literally, be found right under Power's nose. A most lovely sequence of photos on the Web shows a smiling Power, the crinkles at the corners of her eyes, as she receives the 2016 Henry A. Kissinger Prize, bestowed upon her by the Doctor of Death himself.

Of even greater moment than these brave personal initiatives, Power credits herself with decisive policy interventions in the Obama administration. The two instances that she focuses on in her memoir—Libya and Syria—nicely illustrate Power's perverse judgment and her selective outrage.

- *Libya*. As armed forces loyal to Muammar Qaddafi assembled outside Benghazi in 2011, allegedly poised to commit a large-scale massacre of the civilian population, Power emerged as a feverish exponent of U.S. military intervention. In her memoir, Power wavers as to whether "mass executions" impended, but she leaves no doubt that, so ghastly was the bloodletting Qaddafi planned, it was imperative for the U.S. to act. She was among those advocating for a robust U.S. assault on Qaddafi's forces, which, to her delight, was the option Obama finally embraced.[530] It turned out that the military assault, spearheaded by the U.S. and fought under the aegis of N.A.T.O., precipitated Libya's downward spiral into chaos and disintegration. But Power is unapologetic: If the U.S. hadn't taken military action, "no one can say with confidence what would have happened" to Libya.[531] Fair enough; for all anyone knows, it could even have transmuted into a Sweden. What one *can* say with confidence, however, is that the "humanitarian intervention" she rallied for caused Libya's destruction. Moreover, it is almost certainly the case that Qaddafi's forces were *not* about to commit a large-scale civilian massacre in Benghazi.[532] It might be argued in mitigation that Power did sincerely believe a massacre

was imminent. But the bottom line remains unchanged: Power was wrong about the danger that lurked in Benghazi, while the armed assault she championed caused Libya to implode. In other words, Power couldn't have been more disastrously in error. A little humility and remorse would appear to be in order, but one looks for them in vain. Like Edith Piaf, she defiantly declares, "Je ne regrette rien!"[533] Quite the contrary, whereas others chronicled a Hobbesian war of all against all in post-intervention Libya,[534] this cynical Pollyanna approvingly quotes dispatches from a friend who, in the midst of Libya's freefall disintegration, descries the shoots of a "new, free country," as people in "liberated" territory were "enjoying freedom for the first time." And if that's not enough happy—albeit demented—news, there's this: when it was announced that Qaddafi had been ousted from office, Power recalls, her son mistook his name, "shouting, 'No more coffee! Coffee is gone!'"[535] Now, isn't that just so cute?

- *Syria*. It was alleged in 2013 that Syrian strongman Bashar Assad used chemical weapons against his civilian opposition, killing 1,400 people. Obama had already declared beforehand that Syrian use of such weapons would cross a "redline" triggering "enormous consequences." When the alleged chemical attack occurred, however, Obama hesitated: he sought out but failed to get Congressional authorization before acting. For her part, Power was an early and unremitting advocate of military action. The posture of this posturing human rights champion during the Syrian

crisis bewilders. Even as she pontificates on "the importance of the rule of law,"[536] Power has no patience with international law limiting the right of States to use armed force,[537] or even domestic U.S. law limiting presidential war-making power.[538] If they impede her latest military crusade, Power reckons such legal constraints a nuisance to be circumvented by lawyerly artifice. Yet, if limits have been placed on use of force, it's because those truly committed to the preservation of human life recognize that armed force, and its attendant death and destruction, should be the very last resort, after all the facts of the situation have been ascertained and all diplomatic options exhausted. In the instant case, Power has, to begin with, stretched the evidence. Whereas she alleges it's as certain as "the Earth is round" that Assad had used chemical weapons, Obama's own Director of National Intelligence stated that the brief against the Syrian leader was *not* a "slam-dunk."[539] It also turned out that a diplomatic resolution *was* within reach, as Assad ultimately agreed, in accordance with a Security Council resolution, to hand over his chemical weapons stockpile. Power, however, moves the goalpost as she expresses dismay that Obama didn't compel Assad to relinquish the whole of his weapons arsenal.[540] Insofar as such an eventuality could only come to pass if Assad suffered a total military defeat, Power was in effect advocating regime change in Syria. Even accepting, for argument's sake, the legitimacy of engineering from the outside a change in government, on strictly tactical grounds it's still cause to wonder: *How did Power imagine the U.S. could achieve*

> *this objective without getting mired in another war*—it's not as if defeating Assad had shown itself to be a cakewalk, or that Russia and Iran would abandon Syria to its fate?; *What did Power imagine would happen after Assad's ouster*—wasn't Libya a cautionary tale about the day after regime change? Astonishingly, Power doesn't even ponder, let alone pretend to answer, these obvious questions.[541]

The fact is, this wannabe policymaker is an in-over-her-depth pyromaniac, pouring gasoline and then discharging flares wherever her flightiness transports her. Obama praised Power as "one of our foremost thinkers on foreign policy," which, were it true, should send a chill down every American's spine. Her memoir's final pages give cause to question her mental lucidity. Even as she had been a crazed proponent of military intervention in the Obama years, Power deplores in her Afterword the "militarization of U.S. foreign policy," and even as her memoir is packed with her strident public denunciations of official U.S. enemies, Power leaves off by preaching the virtue of "humility about one's judgments."[542] Still, it might be said in extenuation that Power's intentions were good, born of a sensitive if perhaps naïve conscience. But is even that true? No. Her conscience only bestirs at the suffering of victims of official U.S. enemies. In the face of the suffering of victims of the U.S. or its allies, her conscience is—*at best*—as silent as an executioner's; in the worst cases, she's an accomplice to egregious violations of human rights. In other words, before her conscience is aroused, Power first meticulously reckons the opportunity costs, for herself.

- *Drones.* The reader of Power's memoir will search in vain for even a single mention of Obama's drone warfare. According to Amnesty International, "after taking office in January 2009, President Barack Obama markedly expanded the use of drone aircraft for killings." It went on to state that it was "deeply concerned that targeted killings by U.S. drones occurring outside the conditions of armed conflict violate the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life and may constitute extrajudicial executions," and that it "does not accept the U.S.A.'s view that … it is lawful to kill individuals anywhere in the world at any time, whenever the U.S.A. deems appropriate." A 2015 letter addressed to Obama and signed by leading human rights organizations observed, "The United Nations, local and international human rights organizations, and journalists have investigated and reported numerous cases in which there is credible evidence of harm to Yemeni, Pakistani, and other civilians from U.S. strikes carried out in secret, often using drones."[543] Our ever voluble, *indignada* idealist, however, is mum; whereas her eldest son features on scores of pages in Power's memoir, *drone* doesn't even rate a listing in the index.

Further, during her stint in the Obama administration, the suffering of people in the Muslim world deeply anguished Power. Her grief and rage over "the horrors happening day after day in Syria" fill many chapters in her memoir, as does the "murderous crackdown" in Libya. Her memoir is also replete with inspiring exhortations to confront injustice: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions, to be sure. But

turning a blind eye to the toughest problems in the world is a guaranteed shortcut to the same destination."[544] It is passing strange, then, that Power does turn a blind eye to many of the "toughest problems in the world" to be found in Muslim countries neighboring Syria and Libya. Is it just perchance that, if the criminal perpetrators ignored by Power share a common denominator, it's that they're all key U.S. allies?

- *Egypt*. In 2013, Egypt's first democratically elected government, headed by Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, was ousted in a military coup. When demonstrations in support of the deposed regime broke out, the military murdered over 1,000 "overwhelmingly peaceful protesters." The military bloodbath on 14 August 2013 was "one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history"—far in excess of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, which, Power vividly remembers in her memoir, first aroused her passion for justice. Human Rights Watch concluded that "the killings not only constituted serious violations of international human rights law, but likely amounted to crimes against humanity." A police state was then imposed on Egypt by coup leader Abdel Fattah Sisi—including "many killings of protesters by security forces, mass detentions, military trials of civilians, hundreds of death sentences"—that endures to this day. Secretary of State John Kerry immediately hailed the coup leaders for "restoring democracy" in Egypt, and Obama in 2015 "resumed supplying military equipment to Egypt and announced that most military aid would continue."[545] What does Power have to say about the, as it were, "murderous crackdown" in Egypt and the ensuing

"horrors happening day after day"? Has she vocally, publicly, dissented from Obama's decision to support Sisi, as she has from Obama's decision not to attack Syria? Her memoir, as already noted, mentions that one of 20 female political prisoners she once advocated for was Egyptian, and then perfunctorily observes that this prisoner was only included for cosmetic purposes: "This balance [of including a prisoner held by a U.S. ally] made our stance on human rights credible." Except for fleeting acknowledgement of this single political prisoner, our intrepid, fearless "idealist" falls thunderously silent on Egypt's criminal junta and Obama's support of it.[546]

- *Yemen*. In early 2015, Houthi rebels, having overrun Yemen's capital city, ousted the presiding government. Saudi Arabia then organized an international coalition —mostly Arab states but also including the U.S. and U.K.—to defeat the Houthi rebellion. Both sides committed massive war crimes. Thousands of civilians were killed and many more thousands injured, while civilian infrastructure was reduced to rubble. The majority of civilian deaths resulted from air strikes by Saudi-led coalition forces that targeted civilian areas. On average, according to U.N.I.C.E.F., eight children were killed or maimed every day in Yemen as a direct result of the fighting, of which 73 per cent resulted from air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition. From the inception of hostilities, the U.S. was party to the atrocities, as it approved billions of dollars in weapon sales to Saudi Arabia, and provided targeting intelligence and in-air refueling. In breach of

international law, the U.S. supplied inherently indiscriminate cluster munitions that the Saudi-led coalition targeted at civilian areas. Obama only ceased supplying this weapon after a public outcry by the international community. According to Human Rights Watch, the U.S. "placed Yemen on its list of countries to which arms sales are restricted by the U.S. 'Child Soldiers Prevention Act,' although President Barack Obama granted Secretary of State John Kerry authority to restart aid to Yemen that would otherwise be prohibited by the law." In turn, HRW "called on all countries selling arms to Saudi Arabia to suspend weapons sales until it curtails its unlawful airstrikes." What does our brave, indomitable "idealist" have to say in her memoir about the war crimes committed by the Saudi-led coalition, including her own administration, in Yemen? The short and long answer is, she has nothing to say, as in, *not one word*.[547]

- *Gaza*. The Obama administration was implicated in three large-scale Israeli massacres in Gaza. A tiny parcel of land and among the most densely populated in the world, Gaza is home to two million people, 70 percent of whom are refugees and more than half of whom are children. Since 2006, Israel has imposed a criminal blockade on Gaza, preventing people and goods from entering and exiting. Hebrew University sociologist Baruch Kimmerling described Gaza as "the largest concentration camp ever to exist." In late 2008, Israel launched Operation Cast Lead. In the course of "22 days of death and destruction" (Amnesty), it wreaked havoc on Gaza, as Israeli forces targeted civilian

infrastructure (6,300 Gazan homes were completely destroyed or sustained severe damage; by comparison, one Israeli home "was almost completely destroyed" by Hamas projectiles) and killed some 1,400 Gazans, of whom up to four-fifths were civilians and 350 were children (13 Israelis were killed, of whom three were civilians). The consensus among human rights organizations was that Israel had committed numerous war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity. President-elect Obama stood by silently during the Israeli blitzkrieg—that is, until it threatened to distract from his 2008 investiture, at which point he instructed Israel to end the massacre and it promptly complied. In 2012, Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defense which, in the course of eight days, left 100 Gazan civilians dead, of whom 35 were children, and completely destroyed 126 homes (by comparison, four Israelis were killed and some civilian structures damaged). In 2014, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge. In the course of 51 days, it systematically targeted and destroyed 18,000 Gazan homes (one Israeli home was destroyed), and killed fully 1,500 Gazan civilians, of whom 550 were children (six Israeli civilians were killed, of whom one was a child). After touring Gaza, the head of the International Committee for the Red Cross stated, "I've never seen such massive destruction ever before," while normally impassive U.N. secretary-general Ban Ki-moon observed, "The massive death and destruction in Gaza have shocked and shamed the world." Throughout this, the most devastating of the Israeli massacres in

Gaza, Obama dutifully invoked Israel's "right to defend itself."[548] Here's Power speaking at two different Security Council sessions while Israel was visiting the apocalypse upon Gaza:

> The United States is deeply concerned about the rocket attacks by Hamas and the dangerous escalation of hostilities in the region. In particular, we are concerned about the devastating impact of this crisis on both Israeli and Palestinian civilians. President Obama spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu this morning to reaffirm the United States' strong support for Israel's right to defend itself. As President Obama said today, no nation should accept rockets being fired into its borders or terrorists tunneling into its territory.... Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza have launched more than 1,500 rockets toward population centers in Israel. Hamas' attacks are unacceptable.... Israel has the right to defend its citizens and prevent these attacks. President Obama also said today that we are deeply concerned about the potential loss of more innocent lives.... We feel profound anguish upon seeing the images of suffering from Gaza, including the deaths and injuries of innocent Palestinian civilians, including young children, and the displacement of thousands of people. Israeli civilians, including the elderly and children alike, are fleeing to shelters with little warnings to escape the barrage of rockets from Gaza.... The four Palestinian boys playing on the beach in Gaza City were like boys everywhere, restless for play. Their deaths are heartbreaking.... The Israeli authorities have opened an investigation into their deaths.... The only way to end the situation is an immediate cessation of rocket fire from Gaza and a de-escalation in hostilities. That is what we are calling for today.
>
> ...
>
> Throughout the hostilities we have consistently recognized Israel's right to defend itself, whether [from] attacks by rockets overhead or through tunnels below. No country in the world would tolerate a relentless barrage of attacks on its citizens. Yesterday, in a single day, militants fired 155 rockets into Israel. In the two weeks of fighting more than 2,000 rockets have been launched on Israel. On Sunday, Israel foiled another attempt by armed militants to use tunnels to sneak into the country and launch an attack. And then again yesterday, militants from Gaza entered Israel and killed four Israeli soldiers. In Gaza the toll of the violence has been devastating. More than 600 Palestinians have been killed, the large majority civilians, including at least 59 women and more than 121 children. More than 3,700 more have been injured. Thousands of homes have been damaged, many totally destroyed, and more than

> 100,000 people have been displaced. As the destruction mounts, some 35,000 Palestinians who need food have not been reached. 1.2 million people have little or no access to water or sanitation, and behind every number is a real person, perhaps even a child. The suffering is immense.

Only "Israel has a right to defend itself"—which, in the event, comes down to Israel's right to confine the people of Gaza for years in a concentration camp, to periodically launch unprovoked, lethal attacks against them, and to annihilate them if they dare to resist. And whereas "Hamas" or "militants from Gaza" perpetrated the attacks on Israel, the "violence" in Gaza just happened, without culpable agency: "have been killed," "have been injured," "have been damaged," "have been displaced"—by whom, pray tell, Oh, Avenging Angel of Human Rights Victims?! Later in the second of these speeches, Power proved quite adept at naming the perpetrator of crimes nearly identical to Israel's in neighboring Syria:

> We have once again watched in horror as the Assad regime exercises a stranglehold on the people of Aleppo. Roughly half a million Syrians remain in the city, which has been encircled and slowly asphyxiated by Assad's forces, which have obstructed the flow of basic humanitarian assistance such as food, water, and medicine. In addition, the regime has dropped roughly 15 to 20 barrel bombs a day on the city and a similar number on the suburbs surrounding it.[549]

The Obama administration, and *especially* Power—she was the darling of the Netanyahu government—worked assiduously behind the scenes after each massacre to shield Israel from any accountability for its crimes. "I risked losing my composure," Power remembers in her memoir, "whenever I tried to speak publicly about harm done to children." This Battleaxe from Hell nonetheless successfully lobbied at the U.N. to remove Israel from a list of countries that consistently inflicted

harm on children in wartime.[550] Even as nearly 1,000 children had been killed during Israeli "operations" targeting Gaza, and one million children had been trapped for years in Gaza concentration camp, our "idealist" was firmly of the opinion that Israel did not harm children in Gaza. The martyred people of Gaza could, however, find solace in the fact that Power also successfully lobbied, she gave it her all, to make Yom Kippur a U.N. holiday. Speaking before the Security Council in her final month there, Power positively bragged that Obama was "the only President" who had blocked *every* Security Council resolution criticizing Israel, and also that he had "signed a memorandum of understanding to provide $38 billion in security assistance to Israel over the next 10 years—the largest single pledge of military assistance in U.S. history to any country."[551] What does our impassioned, courageous "idealist" have to say in her memoir about Israel's murderous assaults on Gaza? Well, nothing; *not one word*. Indeed, her only allusion to the Israel-Palestine conflict in her 550-page memoir reads in full:

> And in the Middle East, I played basketball with Israeli and Palestinian girls who hoped to become engineers, architects, and even politicians.[552]

How sweet, how inspiring. Except, one can't help but wonder how many Palestinian girls harbor no hopes, as they have been either confined in a concentration camp or are no longer among the living, and how many might have been free or still alive if Power had not just ceased "turning a blind eye," but also ceased running interference for Israeli criminality.

At one point in her memoir, Power ruefully remembers that "those of us involved in helping devise Syria policy will forever carry regret over our inability to do more to stem the crisis."[553] When it came to drone killings, however, the Obama administration did not suffer from an "inability" to prevent a human rights crime; only an unwillingness. Obama could also, at bare minimum, have ceased being an accessory to human rights crimes by not supplying weapons to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel; that, too, was not a question of "inability" but, again, lack of will.[554] Further, it's almost certainly the case that, if Obama had ceased shielding these states from international censure and sanctions or, better still, if he had joined in holding them accountable, these states would have, if not suspended, at any rate, curbed their criminal policies. As Power herself told the Security Council, "Of course, words alone are not enough to stop suffering on the ground, but identifying who is responsible for abuses and violations of the Charter of the United Nations … is at least a modest form of accountability and an antidote to impunity. It may have some deterrent effect. It at least puts those responsible for violence on notice that we are watching."[555] In other words, Power's vaunted goal of protecting human rights could have been advanced without "militarization of U.S. foreign policy," which she supposedly deplores, but by peaceful, diplomatic methods, which she pretends to advocate in her memoir.[556] The fact that Power, as a member of the Obama administration, went along with, or actively abetted, its criminal policies, makes her morally, and probably also legally, culpable for them. The bottom line is, Power only championed human rights causes that didn't cause her to suffer a loss of earthly rewards. Or is it just serendipity that the

human rights causes which elicited Power's passion or silence aligned perfectly with the causes that served or thwarted U.S. ambitions? From day one and without exception, this human rights crusader promoted the causes that promoted her career. Posing and preening before cameras, she fervently assailed official enemies, while she kept her peace or even abetted crimes of state when it reaped for her professional dividends. In her actions, Power was as morally courageous, she evinced as much personal integrity, she was as beholden to principle, as the Chinese commissar heading the *Beijing Committee in Defense of Native American Rights*. Here's our "idealist" speaking at the Security Council in 2015 after the passing of the Saudi king:

> I wish to offer our condolences to the people and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the loss of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. There is an Arabic proverb that says, "A tree begins with a seed." King Abdullah planted many seeds for Saudi Arabia's future, perhaps none so much as in the education of his people. Shortly after ascending to the throne in 2005, he created an ambitious scholarship program to educate Saudi students abroad...., and in 2011 granted women the right to vote and run in municipal elections.... King Abdullah prioritized strengthening the United States-Saudi counterterrorism relationship, including fighting violent extremist groups such as Al-Qaida.[557]

A trailblazing educator and feminist, a resolute foe of violent extremist groups—isn't that how everyone remembers the Saudi king? But, truly, it dismays that Power omitted his tireless defense of LGBT rights. Whereas Power purports to have sharply differed with Jeane Kirkpatrick, truth be told, on essentials only a flea's hop separated them. Here and there, on the margins and at the edges, where it didn't cost her anything, and it could burnish her saintly image, maybe Power did some good. But even that good must be weighed against the evil she perpetrated: her maniacal support for military

intervention in Libya that destroyed a country; her feverish advocacy of armed intervention in Syria—which, fortunately, Obama did not heed—that could only have exacerbated the humanitarian catastrophe there; her silence in the face of, or aggressive complicity in, human rights crimes committed by the U.S. and its allies. On balance, the verdict must be: Power wasn't just a disaster, she was downright *evil*. It might be wondered why so much space has been expended on a nonentity who probably didn't have much say in the Obama White House. Like Rhodes, she was so undisguisedly a flake, it's hard to conceive anyone took this war-monger-cum-hippie-lovechild seriously. Power's principal function was to put—in the double sense—a pretty face on Obama's foreign policy. Indeed, she was just so pure of principle that it drove The Great Leader "nuts." In other words, Power incarnated the outermost limit of idealism in the Obama White House. But on close scrutiny, it's revealed that Power was just another ruthless political hack and, it follows, Obama himself was, at his best, as fake as his lactating crinkly-eyed babe.

Table 1

A Numerical Analysis Of
Samantha Power's Human Rights Idealism

During her stint as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. (2013-2017), Samantha Power delivered 156 speeches in the Security Council (UNSC).[558] This table quantifies the number of speeches in which she explicitly condemned the human rights crimes of a U.S. enemy in the Middle East versus how many times she explicitly condemned the human rights crimes of U.S. allies in the Middle East. Fully one-quarter of all Power's speeches in the Security Council denounced the Russian-backed Assad regime, while not a single line in a single one of her 156 speeches explicitly denounced the Sisi regime in Egypt, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, or Israeli actions in Gaza.

Number of U.N. Speeches in which Samantha Power Explicitly Condemned the Human Rights Crimes of the…

Russia-backed Assad regime in Syria[559]	U.S.-backed Sisi regime in Egypt	U.S.-backed Saudi coalition against Houthi areas in Yemen[560]	U.S.-backed Israeli regime against Gaza[561]
38	0	0	0

In one of her last speeches at the Security Council, Power was so enraged by Russian support of Assad's atrocities that, as emotively recalled in her memoir, she turned directly to the Russian ambassador and "extemporaneously posed a set of questions that I felt I urgently needed him to answer":

> Are you truly incapable of shame? Is there literally nothing that can shame you? Is there no act of barbarism against civilians, no execution of a child that gets under your skin, that just creeps you out a little bit? Is there nothing you will not lie about or justify?[562]

If, while Power spoke, the spirits of Gaza's murdered children were fluttering overhead, a band of angels, as it were, how fortunate our "idealist" is that, ignoring the ancient call to Justice, they didn't swoop headlong into her mouth, down her windpipe, and rip out, chew up and vomit out her Luciferian innards.

(Fade out to "Sinnerman")[563]

The Obama White House was organized in concentric circles, in which affectivity and power stood in inverse relationship. The outer-inner circle consisted of Obama's key advisors. Although not on intimate terms with POTUS, these resolutely establishment figures set the parameters of public policy. Not knowing, say, economics, and not curious to get a handle on it, Obama could only choose from the truncated range of options they authoritatively presented. In the meanwhile, the memoirs from the Obama years emanate mostly from his personal entourage. They stood in intimate proximity to POTUS but, in the great scheme of things, didn't wield much in the way of power. Apart from their assigned tasks, the principal function of this inner-outer circle was to stroke the ego of this most insecure president. Besides "looking" and "sounding" "presidential," on which he coasted during his term of office, Obama was, and he couldn't but know it, a null set. Send in the clowns, the groupies and grovelers, the flunkies and floozies—Mastromonaco, Rhodes, Litt, Jarrett,

Power, Love—to reassure The Great Leader, whenever his spirits sagged and his doubts surfaced, of his "brilliance" and "greatness," as if this coterie of mostly dunderheads could judge such things.[564] (The zone between this inner circle and the policy heavyweights in his Cabinet was occupied by political advisors, the likes of David Axelrod, David Plouffe, and Rahm Emanuel, from whom the President, for sure, solicited counsel but, nimble as he became at playing the domestic political game, Obama ultimately called the shots.) After his presidency expired, the libidinally-bonded myrmidons of Barack—hot Favs, chill Ben, decked out in their Adidas and J. Crew, you can't help yourself, you gotta retch—fanned out across the media to keep His tremulous flame aglow. When future historians come to ponder this creepy chapter in American history, it will rightly be remembered as an Elmer Gantry tale but on an epic scale.

But for all that, would his congregation believe him? If they jeered when he faced them, he would be ruined... Thus he fretted in the quarter-hour before morning service, pacing his study and noting through the window—for once, without satisfaction—that hundreds on hundreds were trying to get into the crammed auditorium.... He knelt. He did not so much pray as yearn inarticulately. But this came out clearly: "I've learned my lesson. I'll never look at a girl again.... I'm going to be all the things I want other folks to be! Never again!" He stood at his study door, watching the robed choir filing out to the auditorium chanting. He realized how he had come to love the details of his church; how, if his people betrayed him now, he would miss it: the choir, the pulpit, the singing, the adoring faces. It had come. He could not put it off. He had to face them. Feebly the Reverend Dr. Gantry wavered through the door to the auditorium and exposed himself to twenty-five hundred question marks. They rose and cheered—cheered—cheered. Theirs were the shining faces of friends. Without planning it, Elmer knelt on the platform, holding his hands out to them, sobbing, and with him they all knelt and sobbed and prayed, while outside the locked glass door of the church, seeing the mob kneel within, hundreds knelt on the steps of the church, on the sidewalk, all down the block. "Oh, my friends!" cried Elmer, "do you believe in my innocence, in the fiendishness of my accusers? Reassure me with a hallelujah!" The church thundered with the triumphant hallelujah, and in a sacred silence Elmer prayed: "O Lord, thou hast stooped from thy mighty throne and rescued thy servant from the assault of the mercenaries of Satan! Mostly we thank thee because thus we can go on doing thy work, and thine alone! Not less but more zealously shall we seek utter purity and the prayer-life, and rejoice in freedom from all temptations!" He turned to include the choir, and for the first time he saw that there was a new singer, a girl with charming ankles and lively eyes, with whom he would certainly

have to become well acquainted. But the thought was so swift that it did not interrupt the paean of his prayer: "Let me count this day, Lord, as the beginning of a new and more vigorous life, as the beginning of a crusade for complete morality and the domination of the Christian church through all the land. Dear Lord, thy work is but begun! We shall yet make these United States a moral nation!

* * *

The "Obama legacy" is the lovingly wistful locution invented by his woke sycophants, as if Obama left behind a mother lode of achievements. To be sure, Obama, his cult, and the Democratic Party apparatus that elevated him did accomplish two things of distinction: derailing the Bernie Sanders insurgency and ushering in Donald Trump. The touted promise of the Hillary Clinton campaign in 2016 was that it would build on Obama's legacy. But for the vast majority of Americans, building on Obama translated into building on quicksand. At the 1984 Democratic Party convention, Governor Mario Cuomo delivered a scorching verdict on Ronald Reagan's term of office, which could also stand as the epitaph on the Obama years:

> That its disastrous quality is not more fully understood by the American people, I can only attribute to the President's amiability and the failure by some to separate the salesman from the product.

A slice of the disillusioned, disaffected electorate decided in 2016 to throw in their lot with another outsider—by virtue not of his race but, instead, his uncouthness—who held out once more the prospect of hope and change. Of Trump, Obama disparagingly observed in his presidential memoir that he "trafficked in a currency that, however shallow, seemed to gain more purchase with each passing day."[565] It sounds familiar. Indeed, it might be supposed that their notorious mutual loathing traces back, not to principles or policy, but, on the contrary, to what Freud called the "narcissism of small differences." Their embrace of Trump in 2016 was adduced as proof positive that his white worker constituency was beyond the pale. But, arguably, they made the rational choice: between the certainty of sinking ever deeper and a roll of the dice, should it surprise if they gave themselves over to fortune? When the Democratic Party leadership—not least

Obama—undercut Bernie's campaign a second time in 2020, another Trump term seemed a foregone conclusion as the Democratic nominee, Joe Biden, looked to be a cross between a "Stepford" wife and a victim of alien "body snatchers." (If it's an open question whether Bernie would have trumped Trump in a matchup, that's not because his candidacy lacked broad appeal but, on the contrary, because the entire ruling elite across the political spectrum, its money and its media, Republicans and Democrats alike, would have mounted a full-court press to defeat his popular insurgency.)[566] But this time around, fortune, which favored Trump in 2016 as voters decided to gamble on his presidency, aligned against him, as a pandemic all of a sudden swept the planet and his inept handling of it, an epic self-inflicted wound, cost him an election that was his to lose.

The Obama cult is rooted in and the fully ripened fruit of *identity politics*. How, then, should *its* legacy be reckoned? Identity politics has distracted from and, when need be, outright sabotaged a class-based movement that promised profound social change. It counsels Black people not to trust whites, as their racism is so entrenched and so omnipresent as to poison their every thought and action. It conveys to poor whites that they, no less than the white billionaire class, are beneficiaries of racism, so that it would be foolhardy of them to ally with Black people. It fractures, splinters, fragments a natural and necessary alliance of the have-nots by splicing and dicing them into, literally, an infinitude of subgroups, each of which insists on parity representation in any coalition, creating a cacophony of demands and preempting any possibility of that broad unity and solidarity which, alone, can defeat the organized, ramified power of wealth. Marx hopefully anticipated that capitalism would flatten the distinctions and divisions riddling the working class, so as to create a mighty homogenized force bound by a common interest in overthrowing the system. The objective of politics, Mao Tse-tung famously exhorted,

was to "unite the many to defeat the few." Whereas, identity politics divides the many so as to, designedly or not, *enable* the few. It conjures a hierarchy of oppressions, in which each group vies with the others for the position of most oppressed—Kimberlé Crenshaw says Black women are most oppressed, Angela Davis says it's transgender people, Ibram X. Kendi says it's poor transgender Black women.[567] The victors in this inverted Oppression Sweepstakes, where you win by being the biggest loser, get to leap to the head of the queue as most worthy of preferential treatment, while, simultaneously, fomenting new resentments among those shoved further and further behind. Then, identity politics puts forth demands that either appear radical but are in fact politically inert—Defund the police, Abolition of prisons—as they have no practical possibility of achievement;[568] or that leave the overall system intact while still enabling a handful, who purport to represent marginalized groups, to access—on a "parity" basis—the exclusive club of the "haves." This, in effect, performance politics has spawned a disgusting den of thieves who brand themselves with radical-sounding hashtags, churn out radical-sounding tweets, and insinuate themselves into positions of prominence, as they rake in corporate donations, cash corporate paychecks, hang out at the watering holes of the rich and famous, and thence can be safely relied upon not to bite the hand that feeds them. In a word, identity politics is a business—in the case of Black Lives Matter "leaders," a most lucrative and dirty business.[569] The enterprising BLM Inc leadership—Tamika Mallory, Patrisse Cullors, Shaun King et al.—are the lineal descendants of the Civil Rights era "poverty pimps" who exchanged loyalty to the Democratic Party machine for War on Poverty largesse. A Rev. Al (Sharpton) paper doll chain, these BLM grifters pretend to represent bereaved families of Blacks murdered by police but, in fact, lock them out, as well as the grassroots organizations actually fighting police violence. In the meantime, they amass huge personal fortunes

denouncing racism, capitalism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, misogyny, etc., on *Democracy Now!* in the morning;[570] making commercials for Cadillac, cutting multimillion dollar book and video deals, charging $15,000 per sixty minutes on Zoom to deliver moronic pabulum, in the afternoon; and dressing (or undressing) to the nines at the Grammys and Oscars at night. On the opposite side, the movement behind Bernie Sanders endeavored to build a broad coalition on the premises that the system no longer functions for the overwhelming majority of the American people; that to make it work requires a radical redistribution of wealth; and that even as all the "have-nots" would benefit from "our revolution," those who have suffered most would benefit more. In the end, this vision was defeated, although it did plant the seed for a radical agenda in the future. In part, this setback resulted from the infancy of the movement, which still hadn't figured out how to cobble together that grand coalition in which everyone's legitimate rights are respected, none neglected, without alienating any of its constituent parts. But it must also be said, without fear or equivocation, that identity politics in its many guises—from the cold calculation of the Democratic Party to weaponize biological difference to the preening and posturing of radical-chic hustlers—played a most pernicious role in wrecking the most hopeful movement to come along in generations, and has become a fundamental hindrance to the radical transformation of our radically unjust society.

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Conclusion to Part I

Cancel Culture might be defined as the turning of a person into a non-person. After World War II, it was popularly called McCarthyism. It signified, in the first place, the exercise of State power to silence critics, real or imagined, of postwar U.S. politics—in particular, the anticommunist crusade abroad as Washington consolidated its global hegemony, and the purging-cum-taming at home of the labor and Negro rights movements, in which communists and other militants prominently figured. The cancelling could be literal, as in the electrocution of alleged atomic spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, or the whiting-out of a person, as in the removal of Paul Robeson's name from record books. Its most common form, however, was the blacklist. Many of the heroes of my youth had been blacklisted, but also had, despite all, stayed true to their youthful convictions; not dogmatically, as almost all of them had left the Communist party, but still unreconciled to the capitalist system, and committed, at any rate in theory, to its overthrow. A picture of Robeson sits on my bookshelf beside a picture of Marxist economist Paul Sweezy, while my bathroom reading includes Marxist literary critic Annette Rubinstein's sprawling study of English literature from Shakespeare to Shaw. I knew Sweezy and Rubinstein personally, and I revered Robeson from afar, later often ruing that I had never summoned the inner wherewithal to meet him (were it even possible; he lived in seclusion). Identity politics was also a mainstay of the Left in those days. Alongside the "class question," the Left also stood in the forefront of struggles bearing on the "Jewish question," the "woman question," and the "Negro question." These latter questions denoted

social struggles not directly and immediately reducible to the class struggle. They possessed some irreducible dimension, athwart class; exactly how they "intersected" with the class struggle was a matter of often heated contention, although it was taken for granted that their full and final resolution could only be realized in a socialist (or communist) society.

Being a person of the Left, it went without saying that I wouldn't get a fair shake, personally or professionally, in the dominant culture; indeed, if I did, it could only be because I had "sold out." After I left my Maoist politics behind in the late 1970s, when the Gang of Four was overthrown and Maoist ideology expeditiously junked, it could be said that I became a Chomsky groupie, although I prefer disciple: his every utterance was my holy writ, as in, not "Chairman Mao said…," but "Professor Chomsky said…." The first rule of Chomsky-ism was that the establishment media were the enemy. Their function was to "manufacture consent" by distilling the facts through the sieve of ruling ideology. The Newspaper of Record, as the *New York Times* was called back then, set the national and local news agenda each morning, while the journals of liberal opinion—*New Republic*, *New York Review of Books*, *Atlantic*—allowed for more dissent on the margins, but, in the famous "last analysis," didn't stray far from the party line. Chomsky's numberless books documented in withering detail just how narrow this range of permissible dissent was, while his own person—conspicuously absent from op-ed pages and public affairs programming—exemplified the power and determination of "the ruling class" and their doctrinal organs to suppress inconvenient facts, even if it meant cancelling one of the greatest minds in human history. Even in the best of circumstances, I myself would not have had significant access to these venues. I was not, and am not, a first—or even second—rank thinker. (At one point in my life, that acknowledgment would have personally rankled, but not anymore. I

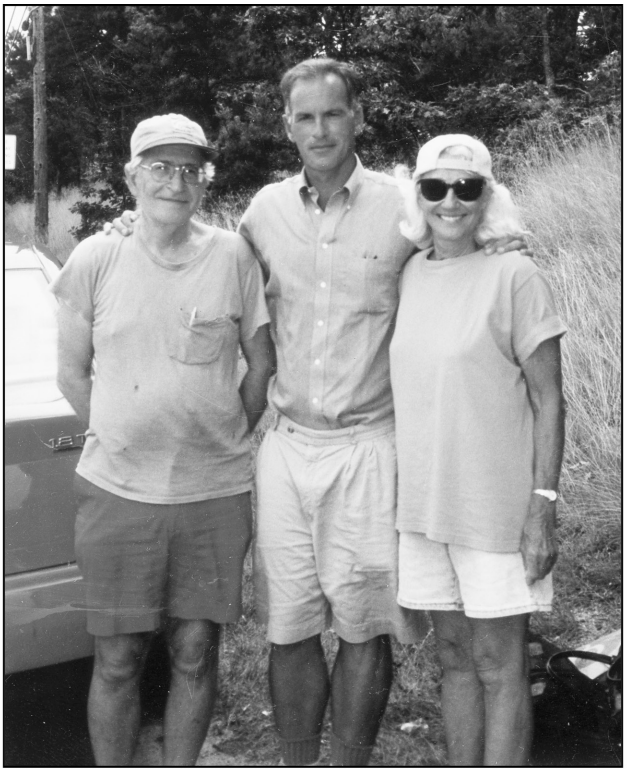
am confident that I've had, despite my limited innate endowments, and even if only by dint of hard work, and even if only on the exceptional occasion, something of value to say, so as to justify my earthly existence and attendant consumption of scarce natural resources.) Still, I did intermittently experience a close encounter of the disillusioning (if I had harbored illusions, which I didn't) kind, which might be recalled here as illustrative of how cancel culture has functioned.

In 1984, while still a graduate student in the Princeton University Politics Department, I discovered that a bestselling book on the Israel-Palestine conflict, that had also won unstinting scholarly acclaim, was a full-blown hoax. Back in the day, Israel was one of those hot-button issues on which no dissent was brooked, not on the margins, not anywhere. I eventually made contact with a *Times* reporter (Colin Campbell) as well as its most independent columnist (Anthony Lewis).[571] I was forced to leap through a thousand hoops. The *Times* demanded more and more proof of my accusation, more and more expert testimony corroborating it, supposing, no doubt, that I'd finally give up in despair, except I'm not a quitter. But when the article was printed, finally, it was buried in the theater page, without even a listing in the paper's index, and stripped of all the substantiating evidence, while I was portrayed as the handmaiden of an anti-Israel conspiracy. (Later on, after the story could no longer be suppressed, as the hoax had been widely ridiculed in the United Kingdom, Lewis would publish a column exposing the book's fraudulence.) One curious sideshow to this story perhaps also merits retelling. When I completed my exposé of the hoax, I submitted it to several major journals. Robert Silvers, editor of the prestigious *New York Review of Books*—in its heyday a review in its pages could make or break an academic career—personally contacted me to schedule an appointment. On a high from this incipient entrée into charmed circles, I accidentally cut a deep

gash in my skull (it scraped a metal store awning). The blood had barely clotted, but, not wanting to be a minute late, I still made a bee line for Silvers' office. He told me that his close friend, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, was very impressed by my work. Now I am giddy with joy! Silvers arranged for me to meet Hertzberg, who was then teaching at Columbia University. I'd barely stepped foot in Hertzberg's office, however, before he began referring to us collectively as "we liberal Zionists." I thought to myself: Wait a minute, what does he mean "we"? Hertzberg next announced that he would arrange to be my thesis advisor. Things were moving fast. But then the do-or-die question came; it always does, eventually. "Are you in Chomsky's stable?" he inquired. I didn't quite understand what that locution *stable* denoted, but I knew enough to recognize this as a moment of truth. I am often asked whether I regret any major decisions I made in the past. I can honestly say no. At each critical juncture in my accreting cancellation, I was acutely aware, my answer to this or that question would significantly decide my fate in life. Which is to say, each reply of mine came after careful deliberation; contrary to popular opinion, I am *not* impulsive; stubborn, yes, impulsive, no. In the event, I told Hertzberg that I held Chomsky in the highest esteem and was deeply indebted to him for his support. This was the last I ever heard from Hertzberg and Silvers. Truth be told, it was probably the easiest decision in my life. Indeed, I was proud of myself not to be tempted, at all, by the lure of fame and fortune, and I was grateful for this test of my fidelity to Truth (and Chomsky), so that I could prove in my own person dead wrong the cynics who imagine, or console themselves, that everyone has a price. Once, when my fate in life was sealed as my professional prospects approached negative infinity, Professor Chomsky's wife, Carol, vented her exasperation that he didn't sufficiently discourage me from taking the path of no-return. He did, however, warn me, again and again and again, but each warning—it

won't surprise the reader—stiffened my resolve, come what may, not to sell out.

Yin and Yang



Noam and Carol Chomsky

At the last moment it appeared that my doctoral dissertation wouldn't be approved. I panicked and sunk into despair. Every night I would gravely consult with Professor Chomsky on how to proceed. When my voice started to crack, he would invariably ask: "Do you want to speak to Carol?" I did eventually get the degree, but from there things went from bad to worse. As the cancellations relentlessly piled up, I could always count on his wisdom and her warmth.

When my book *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering* was published in 2000, my small leftwing publishing house, Verso Books, invested a veritable fortune (relative to its shoestring budget) in a publicity package, including a fancy sticker, that was sent to 250 potential reviewers. The book was, at first, almost completely ignored. However, when it unleashed a firestorm in the U.K. (and later in Germany; it was eventually a bestseller in many European countries and was translated into a score of languages), the

New York Times ran a review. The reviewer, an Israeli military historian turned Holocaust expert, ridiculed the notion of Holocaust profiteers as "a novel variation on the anti-Semitic forgery, 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.'" He then let loose a barrage of invective: "bizarre," "outrageous," "paranoid," "shrill," "strident," "indecent," "juvenile," "self-righteous," "arrogant," "stupid," "smug," "fanatic," and so forth.[572] (In a priceless sequel some months later, this same reviewer did a volte-face, as he railed against the "growing list of Holocaust profiteers," and put forth as a prime example … "Norman Finkelstein's 'The Holocaust Industry.'")[573] Out of curiosity, I subsequently dug up the *Times* review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and, lo and behold, *Der Führer* fared rather better than me in its pages. Although dismayed by Hitler's antisemitism, the reviewer did award "this extraordinary man" high marks for "his unification of the Germans, his destruction of Communism, his training of the young, his creation of a Spartan State animated by patriotism, his curbing of parliamentary government, so unsuited to the German character; his protection of the right of private property."[574] It might of course be the case that, even if I wasn't worse than Hitler (I should hope that I need not argue this point), still, mine was an odious book and I was deserving of the obloquy hurled at me. But was that true? The most incendiary portion of the book argued that American Jewish communal leaders, Jewish public officials and Jewish lawyers (also the occasional Shabbos goy) conspired to blackmail the Swiss banks and then German industry in the name of "needy Holocaust victims." After the book's publication and out of the blue, Professor Raul Hilberg, the founder and dean of Holocaust Studies, weighed in on my findings:

> When I read Finkelstein's book, *The Holocaust Industry*, at the time of its appearance, I was in the middle of my own investigations of these matters, and I came to the conclusion that he was on the right track. I refer now to the part of the book that deals with the claims against the Swiss banks, and the other claims pertaining to forced

> labor. I would now say in retrospect that he was actually conservative, moderate and that his conclusions are trustworthy. He is a well-trained political scientist, has the ability to do the research, did it carefully, and has come up with the right results. I am by no means the only one who, in the coming months or years, will totally agree with Finkelstein's breakthrough.

I was later informed by Professor Hilberg that Elie Wiesel and the U.S. Holocaust Museum regularly rang him up pleading that he remove his comment, which was reprinted on the back cover of the paperback edition of my book. He refused.[575]

It's often said that bad publicity is better than no publicity, but that's not always the case. The *Times Book Review* in that era was the arbiter of respectable taste. Second-tier newspapers decided which books to review and librarians decided which books to order based on a *Times* review. Once the word was out that the *Times* had declared me, my person, beyond the pale—"paranoid," "fanatic," later it would be said by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) that I was a "Holocaust denier"[576]—my name was no longer mentionable in polite company. Bucking the party line, University of California Press did publish in 2005 my book, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the misuse of anti-Semitism and the abuse of history*.[577] A remarkable back story preceded its publication. Debating Alan Dershowitz of Harvard Law School after release of his national bestseller, *The Case for Israel*, I alleged on the public affairs program *Democracy Now!* that he had plagiarized a hoax (indeed, the very hoax I had exposed in 1984); that he had falsified and otherwise mangled his source material; and that every substantive claim in his book, beginning with the author's name on the cover, was open to question. It became appallingly clear as the debate unfolded that Dershowitz was ignorant of the book's content. After playfully needling him about "his" book's authorship, I finally got him to take the bait:

> FINKELSTEIN: I read your book. Or the book you purport to have written.
>
> DERSHOWITZ: Now you claim somebody else wrote it?

FINKELSTEIN: I hope so. For your sake I truly hope you did not write this book.

DERSHOWITZ: I proudly wrote it.

FINKELSTEIN: I think the honorable thing for you to do would be to say I didn't write the book, I had no time to read it, I'm sorry.

Dershowitz would later allege that he had been "ambushed" on the program. Truth be told, he did have a point: Was it fair that only *one* of us had read "his" book? I then proceeded to fully document his scholarly crimes and misdemeanors in *Beyond Chutzpah*. When Dershowitz got wind of the book, he prodded California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to block its publication. But the governor refused to "exert influence in this case because of the clear, academic freedom issue it presents."[578] Dershowitz next threatened via his lawyer to bankrupt UC Press: "your appendix—if it is not removed before publication—is going to lead to painful surgery for the Press." (The book's appendix exposed Dershowitz's plagiarism.)[579] It might be expected that, when the senior-most professor of the most prestigious law school in the U.S., who is also a vaunted First Amendment civil libertarian, goes to extraordinary lengths in order to suppress publication of a book that documents his multitudinous breaches of scholarly protocol, the occasion of the book's publication by a respected publishing house would have piqued many a reviewer's curiosity. In fact, it was barely noticed. One would have to be blinder than King Lear not to see that I had now graduated to being officially cancelled, a non-person.

The sad and sorry tale here retold, however, does not yet present a complete picture. I have not fared any better in leftist venues. The flagship publication of the political left back in my day was *The Nation* magazine. I was effectively banned from its pages the whole of my public life. Almost without exception, every piece of writing I submitted to *The Nation* the past 40 years has been summarily rejected, and it has not reviewed a book by me in decades.[580] It was an irony I

somehow savored that *The Nation*, which, as a matter of editorial pride, had defined itself in opposition to the McCarthyite blacklist, notwithstanding blacklisted me. During my tenure debacle at DePaul University in 2007, *The Nation* weighed in by seconding the opinion that Professor Dershowitz's scholarship and my own were of a piece: "such people [i.e., Dershowitz and myself] are often inclined to stretch evidence to the breaking point, and occasionally beyond."[581] Earlier, the political editor of *The Progressive*, Ruth Conniff, declared on Wisconsin Public Radio that I was a "Holocaust minimizer." The chief editor and publisher of *The Progressive*, Matthew Rothschild, defended Conniff's defamation: didn't I cite the figure of 5.1 million Jews killed during the Nazi holocaust?[582] But that figure comes from Raul Hilberg's authoritative study, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. While my "comrades" on the left sedulously sabotaged my tenure bid, Hilberg, a conservative Republican, came out firmly in my defense.[583] Based on my own experience and what I've witnessed a few degrees removed, it is my considered opinion that leftists aren't any more beholden to Truth and Justice as a point of *personal* ethic than those situated at other calibrations along the political spectrum. Because its ideology is formally committed to reason, on the one hand, and the underdog, on the other, the political left is, if not in perfect sync, still, not inherently at loggerheads with Truth and Justice. But the left is just as infected by elitism and racism, just as riddled by cliques and cabals, just as given to power-plays and back-scratching, and just as ruthless and aggrandizing as the political center or right. Presenting an abundance of evidence, I charged in *The Holocaust Industry* that Burt Neuborne, former National Legal Director of the A.C.L.U., was a Holocaust huckster. While piously proclaiming that he had represented "needy Holocaust victims" pro bono in memory of his deceased daughter, Neuborne raked in a cool $8 million plus. The editor of *The Nation*, Victor Navasky, immediately chimed in to defend Neuborne.[584] When

a fellow member of the left nomenklatura was called to account for his misdeeds, Navasky proved to be as beholden to Truth and Justice as to yesterday's toast. A dear friend, who's a non-ideological liberal, once passed on some sage advice that has stayed with me: character is a much better gauge than ideology of a person's virtue. I have *never* been on a mainstream national radio or television program. Brian Lehrer, who moderates a public affairs program on the local New York affiliate of hyper-woke National Public Radio (N.P.R.) had me on for ten minutes 30 years ago. The target audience of N.P.R.'s inclusive New York affiliate embraces a broad swathe of the city: Lehrer's listener-base is Upper West Side Jewish millionaires, while Leonard Lopate (before he was unceremoniously canned for sexual harassment) spoke to and for Upper East Side Jewish billionaires. That leaves out only a little over eight million New Yorkers. The fact is, both producers were redundant. Although I haven't tuned into either Lehrer or Lopate in decades, still, I know verbatim what they had to say on every conceivable occasion—they love Obama, and Michelle even more, they mourn John Lewis' passing, they hate Trump, they support Black Lives Matter except, maybe, the violence and, oh—did I forget to mention?—they really love Obama and Michelle. Were N.P.R. ever forced to retrench, its programming could easily be replaced by a woke algorithm with no discernible human loss. After those less-than-15 minutes of fame, N.P.R. cancelled me, not, to be sure, for anything I said, but for what they dreaded I might say, were I on another time. In 2018, University of California Press published my magnum opus, *Gaza: An inquest into its martyrdom*. In his blurb for the book, John Dugard, a distinguished authority on international law who was also the U.N. Special Rapporteur in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, described me as "probably the most serious scholar on the conflict in the Middle East." By the most fortuitous of coincidences, my book was published just as the Great March of Return began in Gaza. It was

perfect timing, one might have thought. My publisher sent out 300 review copies. It was reviewed in exactly two venues—a small Palestinian scholarly journal, and a small "pro-Arab" policy journal, where Professor Chomsky wrote, "In its comprehensive sweep, deep probing and acute critical analysis, Finkelstein's study stands alone."[585]

Am I just another failed academic whining, "I could've been a contender"? Perhaps. But maybe, just maybe, I *have* been a casualty of cancel culture. Consider this paradoxical piece of evidence. Notwithstanding my serial cancellations, in 2020 I was ranked the fifth most influential political scientist in the world for the years 2000-2020, just behind John Mearsheimer and ahead of Francis Fukuyama, Samantha Power, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Putnam, and Cass Sunstein.[586] I initially assumed it was a practical joke, but my skepticism was dispelled as a physicist who was party to the project vouched that the ranking was based on a sophisticated algorithm. It was a bittersweet moment of belated recognition. Even allowing for the margin of error, I *was* a known quantity, not just on account of my public notoriety but also my professional distinction. At an early age I had vowed, after Marx, not to let bourgeois society turn me into a "money-making machine." Like Paul Robeson, I did not "retreat one thousandth part of one inch." I stayed true to the values that animated me in the sweetness and hope of my youth. And, it would appear, I wasn't bowed or defeated. I was cancelled, yes; but I wasn't silenced. How I managed to pull this off, I can only speculate. Under the aegis of campus Palestine solidarity groups, I was able to speak at scores of colleges and universities across the United States and abroad.[587] Taking advantage of these occasions to report my latest research findings, I would deliver fact-filled talks that lasted more than two hours. The announcement that I was scheduled to speak invariably evoked outrage from the campus Hillel and allied Israel front organizations. The administration would come under terrific

pressure to cancel me. Op-eds and letters to the editor would pour into the school newspaper denouncing me as a "Holocaust denier," "supporter of terrorism," etc., while Jewish alumni would threaten to withhold their financial contributions. These strong-arm tactics did occasionally cause the school to capitulate (once, I got so fed up that I threatened a lawsuit, and the University of Pittsburgh agreed to a private settlement). But usually the event went off as planned, while pro-Israel groups would typically form a silent candlelight vigil as if in mourning (that I was still alive?) outside the venue. Inside, an overflow crowd would turn up, curiosity piqued at the object of the orchestrated hysteria. It was easy as pie to win over the audience: after being reviled as the Devil incarnate, all I needed do was saunter on stage without horns and pitchfork. The event was usually videotaped and later posted on YouTube. In my early years of lecturing, a long queue would form after my talk and virtually every person in line would begin by saying: "Professor Finkelstein, I've read *all* your books." But during the past decade, I'm invariably told, "Professor Finkelstein, I've watched *all* your videos on YouTube." *O tempora, o mores!* In any event, the frenetic undertakings to cancel me would appear to have backfired, as I was able to reach a much bigger audience as a result of the demonization campaign. However, because of the troubles brought upon the school and sponsoring student groups, the prospect of a return invitation was remote, so these contrived hysterics by Israel's front organizations did, in the long run, pay off for them. It should also be said that, although the "free publicity" did help, it is my opinion that if I did achieve a measure of success (if that's the right word), it was because I was at great pains to do my homework beforehand; I was fair and respectful in the proceedings (I would insist that, after my talk, dissenters in the audience be allowed to interrogate me first); I did have something of substance to say and was sufficiently in command of the facts that I rarely faltered in debate; audiences

respected that I was willing to pay a steep personal price in defense of my beliefs; and ultimately, if I triumphed (again, if that's the right word), it was because the case I was making was true, the cause I was advocating just.[588]

* * *

The cancel culture of my childhood targeted, in the name of anticommunism, popular leftist movements rooted primarily in class politics. The new cancel culture still targets class politics but this time round in the pseudo-radical name of identity politics. *Plus ça change*.... Whereas class politics has historically focused on a massive redistribution of wealth from the haves to the have nots, identity politics focuses on the proportional inclusion of ever-multiplying identities (racial, sexual, etc.) in the uppermost tier of a social structure left largely intact in all its steep gradations. The primary vehicle of this politics is the Democratic Party, the mass base of which was once the white working class, but which is now in transition to becoming an identity-based party, in which identity displaces class as its organizing principle and base constituency. In the olden days, the class struggle was central in left politics, while the struggles of African-Americans, women, etc. stood in an ancillary, uneasy, relationship with it. A residue of this identity politics born of militant grassroots struggle still survives; it emerged, for example, in the early days of the Black Lives Matter movement. But it has proven relatively easy to coopt these leaderships, as well as living symbols of such militancy from bygone days, as the Democratic Party and its affiliates dangle the perquisites of power and privilege. In upscale cultural milieus, the radical preening of identity politics is lapped up by woke audiences as it makes them by osmosis oh-so-down—it even enables them to lecture from on high hard-bitten white workers on *their* privilege[589]—while, not incidentally,

this politics, be it Black reparations, defunding the police, or prison abolitionism, is wholly unthreatening in its political irrelevance.

It is no accident that, as the appeal of a class-based politics has gained traction in recent years, ruling elites across the political spectrum have embraced identity politics to deflect from the class struggle. In my day growing up, about 80 percent of the American people could anticipate, generationally, an incremental improvement in their living standard, while about 20 percent, immortalized by Michael Harrington as "The Other America" (Blacks, poor whites in Appalachia...) were left behind. The ratio has by now been reversed: about 20 percent do just fine (and then some), while 80 percent have been left further and further behind. That has, unsurprisingly, engendered a seething, volatile cauldron of class discontent. Identity politics is an elite contrivance to divert attention from this class chasm. The Republican Party is now anchored in—although it's rarely described as such—*white* identity politics as it persuades white have-nots that "the other" is the enemy. The Democratic Party has sought to carve out a base among "the other" by persuading them that the party of the white working class "basket of deplorables" is the enemy. Their common objective has been to obscure the economic springs of the current misery and futureless future of the overwhelming majority of Americans. A billionaire, Donald Trump, became the improbable voice in the Republican Party of voiceless, frustrated white workers. He stoked their status anxieties by warning them that, after losing everything else as the economy went into freefall, the last "privilege" that they could lay claim to, that of being white—and, therefore, in white America still standing by dint of this birthright one notch above non-whites—was in jeopardy; that this white birthright was being snatched from them by the Democratic Party, which privileged and promoted nonwhites who now stood poised to displace them and leave them behind at the bottom of the heap. The more that bicoastal

Democratic Party leaders displayed open contempt for Trump, the more tightly white workers clung to him as a fellow victim of their holier-than-thou, snooty, arrogant, bigoted woke politics.

The other unlikely champion of the dispossessed was a septuagenarian "privileged white male" Jew from Brooklyn. Bernie Sanders sought to build a coalition from the traditional working-class constituency of the Democratic Party, and eventually a slice of Trump's base, around an Old Left class-struggle politics that would also resonate for other components of the Old Left coalition such as African-Americans, who would benefit disproportionately from his redistributionist platform. In the face of this wholly unanticipated challenge from within, the Democratic Party weaponized identity politics to stop Bernie's class-struggle agenda. During his 2016 and 2020 primary bids, Bernie was alternately cancelled into oblivion or viciously reviled in woke venues. The *New York Times*' Sydney Ember seemed on the verge of herself plunging a dagger into his heart if he didn't, per her daily death-watch, finally drop dead from his heart attack. In the meantime, she cameoed woke goddess Kimberlé Crenshaw singing hymns to corporate America's hip antiracism, which was "outdistancing" un-woke schmucks like Bernie. Over at MSNBC, Joy Reid, who is living proof that not all yentas are Jewish and not all bovines are cows, conscripted a "body language expert" to prove that Bernie was a congenital liar. Hyper-hip (and hyper-stupid) Whoopi Goldberg snarled at Bernie on *The View*, "Why are you still in the race?" "Last I heard," he retorted, "people in a democracy have a right to vote and they have a right to vote for the agenda that they think can work for America." Back in 2016, the Democratic Party hauled out Saint John Lewis to mock Bernie as a no-show in the Civil Rights Movement. A picture then surfaced of Bernie, who was a grassroots activist in the movement, getting arrested. What was Hillary Clinton, who Lewis anointed a civil rights warrior, up to at the

time? She was a "Goldwater Girl," campaigning for ultra-right presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Bernie's supporters stood accused of sexism, as in the epithet "Bernie Bros." If it was rejoined that females were present in equal numbers as males at Bernie rallies, feminist icon Gloria Steinem obliged with the feminist insight that gals only attended Bernie rallies to meet guys.[590] Bernie was chastised by the likes of woke hero Ta-Nehisi Coates for not supporting Black reparations, even as a reparations bill didn't stand a snowball's chance in hell of getting through Congress, and, to boot, the demand was being cynically exploited to derail Bernie's campaign, which offered the only substantive hope for improving the lives of Black people. Enter Angela Davis. Once upon a time she was on the F.B.I.'s Ten Most Wanted List. Now she's on Martha's Vineyard's Five Most Coveted List. Davis has been featured on the cover of *Vanity Fair* and in the *New York Times Magazine*, while the rarefied *New York Review of Books* raved at "this preeminent black woman radical's brilliance."[591] Woke president Amy Gutmann feverishly introduced a presentation by Davis at University of Pennsylvania and, in a royalty-meets-royalty lovefest, South Carolina's second richest billionaire introduced her at University of South Carolina;[592] Davis has even launched a Los Angeles-based "radical" fashion line.[593] In her latter days, Davis' kingdom *is* of this world. Is it impertinent to wonder why her final act differs so—as it were—radically from that of W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King? Herein perhaps lies a clue. Although still prone to denouncing capitalist exploitation (if only as a throwaway line), Davis went along, even joined in, as the identity politics juggernaut targeted the biggest challenge to capitalist exploitation in generations. Not missing a woke beat, Davis proceeded to chide Bernie for "engag[ing] in a kind of economic reductionism that prevents him from … developing a vocabulary that allows him to speak … about the persistence of racism, racist violence, state

violence"; his "difficulty" in "incorporating an analysis of race into his critique of capitalism, and that's exactly what we need, what we would have needed."[594] It might, by the by, be queried whether, in the midst of a devastating pandemic, mass unemployment, and impending mass evictions, a new radical fashion line is "exactly what we need." When Elizabeth Warren dropped out of the Democratic primary, Democracy Now's Amy Goodman rued that this left "the 2020 Democratic presidential race down to two older white men: former Vice-President Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders."[595] As if nothing of substance distinguished them. A jaundiced observer might, incidentally, wonder whether more than a flea's hop separated those older "privileged white men"[596] from *older Harvard white* women like Warren and Goodman. The Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky sketched a species of political "opportunism" that

> under the influence of external circumstances ... is at certain times compelled to make a parade of radicalism. For this purpose it must overcome itself, violate its political nature. By spurring itself on with all its strength, it not infrequently lands at the extreme limits of formal radicalism. But hardly does the hour of serious danger strike than [its] true nature ... breaks out to the surface.[597]

When the "hour of serious danger" to the status quo struck during Bernie Sanders' class-struggle insurgency, the "true nature" of woke radicalism—not just its opportunism but, even more, its rancid, reactionary core—was exposed as each and all of these erstwhile "radicals" enlisted under the banner to stop him. It was an irony of Bernie's primary run that he received a warmer reception on Fox media (from the hosts and the audience), as it was manifest that he genuinely respected their persons. "The intellectual elite does have," Bernie pointedly observed in a 2021 interview, "a contempt for the people who live in rural America. I think we've got to … treat them with respect ... we can't treat people with contempt."[598] Ultimately, Bernie's primary campaign crashed against the identity politics brick

wall in South Carolina and fell to pieces. The Democratic Party patronage system used to conscript union leaders—V. I. Lenin (among others) denoted them the "labor aristocracy" and "labor lieutenants of capital"[599]—to keep militant workers in line. The Party now elevates to coveted perches African-American elected officials, who in return coax and corral their constituents into moderate pastures. Just as Bernie appeared unstoppable, Representative Jim Clyburn, who was the Number 3 Democrat in the House of Representatives, endorsed Joe Biden, which vaulted Biden over the finishing line in first place.[600] The doomsday weapon in the Democratic Party's identity politics arsenal, Barack Obama, then went into action cajoling other contenders in the primary to drop out, thereby sealing Bernie's defeat on Super Tuesday.

It remains an intriguing question, why did Southern Blacks obediently vote for Biden after Clyburn's endorsement instead of Bernie, even as Bernie's platform spoke so much more forcefully to their essential needs, and he didn't lack in prominent Black surrogates such as Nina Turner, Cornel West, Danny Glover, and Killer Mike? It's often said that Southern Blacks tend to be "defensive" in their voting, as they choose the safest, most electable Democratic candidates, even if that benefits the most moderate among them, to preempt the possibility that a dyed-in-the-wool reactionary might win. But the fact is, had Clyburn and Obama endorsed Bernie, it's almost certain that Black voters would have overwhelmingly cast their ballots for him. The question might then be rephrased as: from whence sprang Clyburn and Obama's power of persuasion? A clue could be found in Clyburn's endorsement speech for Biden. "I know Joe, we know Joe," Clyburn intoned. "*But most importantly, Joe knows us.*" That is, Biden's different; he mingles with us, he doesn't disdain us. When queried as to what accounts for Obama's appeal among Black people —it clearly wasn't that he had done something, anything substantive

for them—a veteran African-American activist replied, "He's the only Black public figure who, when his name comes up in the news, we don't have to lower our heads in shame." Obama (alongside Michelle) makes Black people look good in front of whites, and in return Blacks vicariously experience the respect accorded him. The human psyche is not always easy to fathom: it can seek affirmation from those least worthy of passing judgment. Frederick Douglass' last autobiography is punctuated by three dramatic peaks: first, escaping slavery, second, meeting Lincoln, and third, his "reunion" after the Civil War with his former slave-master, Captain Auld, who was on his deathbed. Of this last episode, Douglass graphically recalls Auld's brutalities,[601] but he then goes on to memorialize Auld telling him, "Frederick, I always knew you were too smart to be a slave, and had I been in your place, I should have done as you did." Even as, to the reader, this is a most double-edged appreciation—did all the other slaves deserve their servitude?—Douglass palpably savored these words coming from him: "Captain Auld, I am glad to hear you say this." Even the redoubtable Douglass, it seems, needed to hear this validation, that he deserved better than to be a slave, from his former white slave-master. Each time Obama, tall and erect, looking so regal, descended from Air Force One, or stood huddled with other world leaders, or received foreign dignitaries at a State dinner, each time a white person lauded his genius and statesmanship, it lifted—or so it is imagined—all Blacks in the eyes of white people. It might be supposed that such a secret yearning for recognition, psychologically contorted as it may be, inheres in the master-slave dialectic, even after that relationship has been, at any rate formally, upended. But that's not certain. For sure, Jews have coveted acceptance by Gentile society, not just for the concomitant material rewards, but also from the natural human longing to feel welcome and not an outcast, to be inside and not outside looking in. However, it's most doubtful that Jews have coveted

the *moral validation* of the Goyim. For better or worse (it does cut both ways), Jews have always felt secure in their superiority—the Chosen People of God—to those who despised them; they suffered no deficit in self-esteem that the Goyim could compensate, no inferiority complex that the Goyim could repair; even if, by some fluke of fate, they did seek affirmation, it wouldn't be from those for whom, en masse, they harbored no respect, only varying degrees of contempt.[602] It's hard to decide which is worse, which better: the wounded humility of Blacks or the invincible arrogance of Jews?[603] In any event, Clyburn, Obama, they capitalized on the white embrace of them and the attendant willingness of Black people to defer to their leadership, to stop the Bernie Sanders class-struggle movement dead in its tracks.

The impact of identity politics on culture has been no less baleful. It is no shame to be illiterate; but it is shameful when veritable illiterates arbitrate cultural norms. An "Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum" in California thus defines its field of intellectual inquiry:

> Ethnic Studies is xdisciplinary, in that it variously takes the forms of being interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, undisciplinary, and intradisciplinary. As such, it can grow its original language to serve these needs with purposeful respellings of terms, including history as herstory and women as womxn, connecting with a gender and sexuality lens, along with a socioeconomic class lens at three of its intersections…. Ethnic Studies also examines borders, borderlands, mixtures, hybridities, nepantlas, double consciousness, and reconfigured articulations, even within and beyond the various names and categories associated with our identities…. The foundational values of Ethnic Studies are housed in the conceptual model of the "double helix" which interweaves *holistic humanization* and *critical consciousness*…. Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning will … critique empire and its relationship to white supremacy, racism, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society.[604]

"Ethnic Studies," it goes on to boldly proclaim, "is a literate discipline." But this is not English, or any other language known to wo/x/man. It is the deranged, gobbledygook concoction of a woke machine gone bonkers. The proposal calls, naturally, for diversifying

the curriculum to be more inclusive of historically marginalized groups. Who can quarrel with this? But it ought to be remembered that Douglass, Du Bois, Robeson, King, they all took great pride in having mastered the Western canon. (So does Cornel West.) It ought also to be remembered that—contrary to woke wisdom—the classics of Western civilization have often shined a bright light on its underside and been visionary of an enlightened future. Rousseau's *Emile* is beyond execrable on the female sex.[605] But Plato's *Republic* isn't half bad;[606] Thomas More favorably compares the full, humane use which his Utopia makes of its labor force with the state of affairs in Europe, where women, "which be half of the whole number," are either under-utilized or over-exploited; while Mill's *Subjection of Women* endures as a foundational defense of female equality. Although the canon typically takes for granted the superiority of European civilization, one also encounters oases of skepticism. In his *Essays*, Montaigne both ridicules the moral pretensions of Europeans[607] and extols the civilizations in the New World before European conquest.[608] Indeed, according to him, it was their unmatched virtues that made the New World's inhabitants easy prey to the "treachery, lust, covetousness, and to every kind of inhumanity and cruelty" of Europeans who, for the sake of commerce, committed every imaginable atrocity.[609] Rousseau, in his *Discourse on Inequality*, famously rates non-European, non-technological societies morally superior. Adam Smith, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, judges that, in "their magnanimity and self-command," the "savage nations of North America" are "almost beyond the conception of Europeans," and the "negro from the coast of Africa" possesses "a degree of magnanimity which the soul of his sordid master is scarce capable of conceiving." Of the fate of Africans at the hands of our white forebears in the New World, Smith objurates that "fortune never exerted more cruelly her empire over mankind, than when she subjected those … heroes to the refuse of the jails of

Europe, to wretches who possess the virtues neither of the countries which they come from, nor of those which they go to, and whose levity, brutality, and baseness, so justly expose them to the contempt of the vanquished." It's a close call whether Hegel's lofty contempt of non-European peoples in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* should be reckoned odious or just plain ignorant.[610] Yet, his fellow countryman Kant, in his sketch *Toward Perpetual Peace*, rues that "when discovered, America, the lands occupied by blacks, the Spice Islands, the Cape, etc., were regarded as lands belonging to no one because their inhabitants were counted for nothing." He recalls the "terrifying" infamies inflicted by Europe in the course of its conquest,[611] and ridicules the hypocrisy "of powers who, while imbibing injustice like water, make much of their piety."

It might surprise how much of the canon deeply subverts the status quo, then and now. One would be hard-pressed to name a single Western classic that rates highly acquisitiveness, the accumulation of things, as life's purpose, while it's not difficult to draw up a lengthy list scorning it. Even as he posits a "natural right" to property, Locke puts stringent limits on this right: "enough and as good" must be "left in common for others," and property left to "spoil … is more than his [the owner's] share and belongs to others."[612] The class each semester in which I put to the test Locke's caveats was one of my favorites. If five persons stranded on a desert island race to a lone apple tree, and the first one there picks all the apples, doesn't she, per Locke, still *have to* share them with the others? If Oprah makes no use of 25 rooms in her mansion, don't the homeless have a *right* to them? If a C.E.O. builds a pool in Harlem but never uses it, don't neighborhood children on a swelteringly hot day have a *right* to jump in? If a grocer intends at the end of the day to trash his leftover bagels, don't the hungry have a *right* to them? When the diehard capitalists in the class still stood fast on the unconditional right to one's property, I

presented this hypothetical: If a famine breaks out while there's a glut on the milk market, does a dairy farmer have the right to his milk that will spoil, or do the mothers of starving babes have a *right* to seize it from him? At this point a frustrated student would invariably whine, "Why are you defending communism?" Indeed, I could even tease out from Locke a defense of the civil insurrection that ensued in Los Angeles after the police were acquitted of brutalizing Rodney King.[613]

It cannot be disputed that space must be allocated for additions to the Western canon. But time is finite: only so much can be taught in our schools. So for each addition, there will inevitably be a subtraction. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum recommends inclusion of "significant figures" such as Assata Shakur and Bobby Seale.[614] Should we then ditch W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King? Ibram X. Kendi acclaims Alex Haley's *Roots* as "one of the most influential works of the twentieth century."[615] Should we then scratch Kafka's *The Trial*? Indeed, maybe we should substitute Kendi for Thucydides, DiAngelo for Marx, Crenshaw for Mill. Rich in insight, brilliant in exposition, rebellious in spirit: on the whole, there's good reason why the classics have endured. It would be prudent to hesitate before discarding the venerable in favor of the latest hip fads of cancel culture.[616]

* * *

If not by identity politics, how then should racism be confronted? I think back to the heroes and heroines of my youth. Each was committed to the socialist transformation of society; each was also sensitive to and went out of their way to show solidarity with historically marginalized groups. When antisemitism was still rife in American society, Paul Sweezy, a patrician and, physically, Nietzsche's Blond Beast incarnate, selected as his closest collaborators a trio of Jews (Leo Huberman, Paul Baran, Harry Magdoff). A lifelong trade-

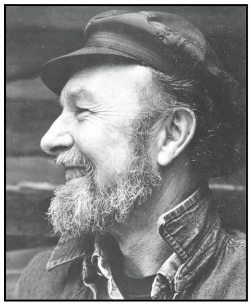
unionist and self-conscious Jew (she was on the original editorial board of *Jewish Currents*), Annette Rubinstein crossed the picket line in 1968 to support the beleaguered Black community in New York City, fighting for community control of schools against the predominantly Jewish and racist United Federation of Teachers.[617] Pete Seeger, a mainstay of the union movement, also contributed lyrics to and helped popularize *We Shall Overcome*. (Martin Luther King first heard the song at a performance by Pete.) Paul Robeson mastered the Yiddish language to the point that my Father was transported back in time by his rendition of *Zog Nit Keynmol*/Song of the Warsaw ghetto. (When my Father, who had been in the ghetto, first listened to the recording in the 1970s, he kept lifting the needle on our phonograph to hear it over and over again, until the record was scratched beyond repair.) I think further back to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade that fought in Spain in the mid-1930s in defense of the Spanish Republic: composed overwhelmingly of American communists, an integrated fighting force when the U.S. Army was still segregated, and of whom fully one-third of the volunteers were Jewish. My mind drifts back further still to Rosa Luxemburg, this exotic creation of a lost epoch: Polish, Jewish, bourgeois, handicapped, female—Rosa didn't wallow in or capitalize on her "intersectionality" but, on the contrary, triumphed over it as she became the brilliant, impassioned (and then martyred) revolutionary leader of the German working class; which—be it noted as a robust class rejoinder to claustrophobic identity politics—fervently embraced this Polish-Jewish-bourgeois-handicapped-female as one of their own.[618] A half century later, when these heroes and heroines of my youth have long passed into eternity and the causes they embodied have receded into oblivion, I still see no reason to revise their order of radical priorities and the broad emancipatory vision to which they linked their life's fortunes. Human dignity is not possible without the ability to pay for a roof over one's head, clothes

on one's back, and food on one's table. Each is also entitled to a few amenities to sweeten one's terrestrial sojourn. Securing these prerequisites of personal self-respect must figure at the very top of the agenda of any movement calling itself radical. Even were these ends achieved, however, it's still a truncated vision of human possibility. Despite all the defeats and disappointments to which I've borne witness in my lifetime, I still see no reason to abandon the hope that Humanity is capable of more: of creating a society in which each finds meaning and gratification in their labor, "not to be wearied," as Thomas More limned it (and as my Father lived it), "from early in the morning to late in the evening with continual work, like laboring and toiling beasts"; a new world in which, not the insatiable accumulation of things, but (again More) "the free liberty of the mind and garnishing of the same … it be supposed the felicity of this life to consist."[619] It's most doubtful that capitalism can usher in this more humane world. However many the permutations and combinations in which it has historically materialized, the essence of the capitalist system, per Marx, appears unalterable: it entrenches the *exploitation* of the many by the few; it is driven by a logic of *accumulation* that prioritizes maximizing profits over satisfying human needs; and it induces a state of *alienation* in which the laborers—be it Charlie Chaplin on the assembly line or an Amazon warehouse worker racing from pillar to post to fill an order—exercises no control over the system overwhelming them but, on the contrary, figure only as cogs in its works.[620] The modalities of the socialist system that would replace it remain an open question. But socialism can only emerge if—Marx used the German verb *aufheben* to capture this process—the capitalist system is abolished and transcended, even as its redeeming features are preserved. The hallmarks of this "new world" issuing forth "from the ashes of the old"[621] seem as appealing now as when Marx first posited them: the full blossoming forth of the human potential of each, which enables

the full blossoming of the human potential of all ("the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all"); each gives their all to the benefit of humanity as a whole, and each receives in return what's needed to maximize their own human potential ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"). Whether this aspiration can be realized, or how nearly it can be approximated, is anyone's guess. But it'll not be known unless each and all of us strive to the fullest to achieve it. "Certainly all historical experience confirms the truth," Max Weber wisely observed, "that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible."[622]

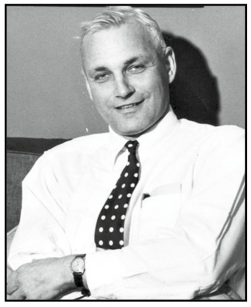
The Red Stars in My Firmament

Paul Robeson



Pete Seeger

Rosa Luxemburg



Paul Sweezy

Annette Rubinstein

The political agendas set forth by W. E. B. Du Bois and the traditional left, respectively, to overcome racism largely overlapped. To be sure, Du Bois subtly diagnosed racism not as a monocausal disease tracing uniquely back to capitalism but, rather, a multicausal syndrome: it sprang from ignorance; it rationalized capitalist super-exploitation; white workers clung to it in order to protect their better-paying jobs and to boost their social status;[623] it reached deep into the irrational chambers of the human mind. Still, from his earliest studies such as *The Philadelphia Negro* to his last, still lucid, days, Du Bois "stressed the economic discrimination as fundamental" and, as such, the aspect of racism that must be tackled first.[624] Alongside expanding economic opportunity, and inextricably intertwined with it, Du Bois foregrounded the struggle for equality before the law. Even as he sheltered no illusions at the cold political calculation behind *Brown* or that it would be implemented anytime soon, Du Bois still waxed euphoric at the Court's decision: "To me this success was beyond anything I had dreamed."[625] Would economic-cum-legal equality abolish racism? Du Bois, who conceded more ground to racism's irrational roots as, over time, he more closely scrutinized it, was skeptical. But such equality was a necessary if not sufficient condition if racism were ever to be eradicated. The essence of this sequencing of priorities would later be captured by Martin Luther King, Jr. President Dwight D. Eisenhower had publicly rebuked the struggle he led for equality before the law: "You can't legislate morality." King sharply rejoined, "A law may not make a man love me, but it can stop him from lynching me."[626] In the rational order of things, transforming the law had to precede transforming the heart. Thus, to break the intractable, sanguinary will of Southern racists, the Federal government, prodded by Northern public opinion, had to enact Civil Rights legislation and then impose it on the South. One might, of course, still cling to the hope that love will eventually win out. But *first*,

the human mind is still a poorly understood instrument; it's the mystery's mystery how one would go about cleansing its innermost recesses. Du Bois could provide only the most nebulous of roadmaps for purging white cogitations such as the "sex-jealousy" that traced back to the hoary past. The notion that one can "interrupt" racism by jolting white people in group-therapy with "feedback" recalls the madness in my day growing up—not just the method but also the "success" rate—of electric shock therapy to jolt homosexuals free of their sinful fantasies. And *second*, substandard education, substandard medical care, and a subminimum wage figure as much bigger impediments to realizing one's dreams than someone else's sub rosa politically incorrect thoughts. Being Jewish, I face no economic or legal discrimination that impinges on my life chances. On the contrary, all other things being equal, it's a boon. A Jew is almost certainly more likely than a non-Jew to be recruited by a medical establishment or law firm or brokerage house, and less likely to be arrested, prosecuted or convicted for perpetrating a crime. America's (*shiksa*) sweetheart, Mary Tyler Moore, married a Jew.[627] The apple of the Clintons' eyes, Chelsea, married a Jew. The apple of Trump's eye, Ivanka, married a Jew (poor her). All three of President Biden's daughters married Jews. To be Jewish carries cachet. But if the full truth be told, upon being introduced to a Jew, won't the thought "cheap Jew" dart through a goy's mind?[628] Is it pleasant? No. Would one—*I*—wish it were otherwise? Yes. Is it the end of the world? No. Each and all of us must bear a load of unfair burdens in life. Or, as Robeson sang,

Some come crippled,
And some come lame,
Bear the burden in the heat of the day.
Some come walking in Jesus' name.
Bear the burden,
In the heat of the day.

Indeed, can it be doubted that—most unfairly—physical beauty opens, ugliness shuts, many a door? The fight against racism must focus, however, not on the intangible, impalpable, unchangeable, invisible, or unprovable, but, instead, on what's substantive, meaningful, and corrigible. In the first place, securing economic opportunity and legal equality.

What place should race, "identity," occupy in the ideal world? In the course of a half century's reading and reflection on this contentious question, I have come across two texts that especially resonated.

- Hannah Arendt wrote an intermittently acerbic "report" on Israel's prosecution of Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann. (He had played a key coordinating role in the Final Solution.)[629] An Israeli Jewish scholar objected to the "heartless, frequently almost sneering and malicious tone" in her account, that supposedly traced back to Arendt's absence of "love of the Jewish people" even as she was a "daughter of our people." Arendt replied:

  > I found it puzzling that you should write: "I regard you wholly as a daughter of our people, and in no other way." The truth is I have never pretended to be anything else or to be in any way other than I am, and I have never even felt tempted in that direction.… I have always regarded my Jewishness as one of the indisputable factual data of my life, and I have never had the wish to change or disclaim facts of this kind. There is such a thing as a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been *given* and was not, could not be, *made*…. You are quite right—I am not moved by any "love" of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life "loved" any people or collective—neither the German people [she was German-born], nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I need love "only" my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons. Secondly, this "love of the Jews" would appear to me, since I am myself Jewish, as something rather suspect. I cannot love myself or anything which I know is part and parcel of my own person…. What good can come out of [Jews who only "love" or "believe" in themselves]? Well, in this sense, I do not "love" the Jews, nor do I "believe" in them; I merely belong to them as a matter of course, beyond dispute or argument.[630] (emphasis in original)

- Julien Benda wrote a polemic against the "identity politics" of his day that would later climax in fascism, war, and genocide. Although it was published in the mid-1920s, Benda already discerned the catastrophe awaiting humankind if it fixated on, reified, our group differences at the expense of our common humanity.[631] Apropos our theme, Benda wrote:

  > Note that what is new in this crusade against individualism ["and for identity politics," it might here be interpolated] … is not the recognition that "the individual is only an abstraction," that to a great extent, he is formed by his race, his surroundings, his nation, a thousand things which are not himself. The novelty is the cult for this servitude, the order given to mankind to submit entirely to it, the contempt shown for any attempt to get free from it. Once again this is the cult … for the *inevitable* part of the human being, the hatred for its free part." (emphasis in original)

The human rights of a victimized group must, of course, be uncompromisingly defended. But identity politics goes further, much further. It endows inherited difference—be it racial, ethnic, or sexual—with positive content: one should be "proud" of who one is. Clearly, one ought not to be ashamed of such difference, and there's something even to be said for being positively at peace with the wholeness of one's being ("a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is"). But it perplexes why one should feel *proud* of one's zoological difference. It makes sense to take pride in an admirable achievement, one which required, on top of innate gifts, sustained personal sacrifice, the protracted harnessing of personal discipline and concentration. The greater the proportion an achievement owes to one's personal investment and the lesser to one's endowments, the greater is the pride to be taken in it. Kant described "rational self-esteem" as the sentiment springing from an attainment born of the application of one's wit and will.[632] From the social standpoint, one's natural genius might be the object of another's envy, but it's what one accomplishes with that genius that evokes admiration. However, one's race, ethnicity, and sexuality merely comprise the "indisputable factual

data" of one's birth. It cannot but be a source of inner unease to "disclaim" or "dispute" such factual data—i.e., to be in denial about them—but, by the same token, wouldn't it be illogical to take "credit" for something over which one has no control and in which one has no input? To be proud of being Black, a woman, or gay defies rational sense; one cannot be proud of what one *is*; only of what one *does*. Further, identity politics asserts the primacy of these biological givens in one's self-definition. On the one hand, identity politics decries these invidious "social constructs"—Black, woman, gay—to which a negative valence has been attached by the world at large. But, on the other hand and simultaneously, identity politics elevates racial, sexual, etc. data to the overarching aspect of one's being; a positive valence is imputed to them, something that one is supposed to embrace as of one's *essence*. Now, it is true that no one comes into this world tabula rasa, "that to a great extent, he is formed by his race, his surroundings, his nation." But what sense is there in making a "cult" of that over which one has no choice; why be enthralled by that to which one is, as it were, in thrall? Why would one want to be defined by an *imposed* identity, an identity determined at birth and overdetermined by society? Shouldn't one aspire to transcend the "inevitable" part—the color of one's skin—so as to be judged by the "free part"—the content of one's character? It is not a question of being ashamed of the ineluctable part, but rather, of not letting something over which one exercised no choice, and which others presumed to decide was your irreducible essence, valorize one's personhood. It is a gauntlet thrown down to the bigot—but also to the cult of identity politics—to be judged by one's heart, mind, and soul, by one's *willed* acts; not by "a thousand things which are not himself" but, on the contrary, by one's autonomous essence, one's essential self.

If taking pride in one's biological person is highly problematic, so, too, is its first cousin: *loving* one's people. To love one's people is to

love one's self writ large. Isn't it "something rather suspect" to rank, of all things, narcissism a redemptive virtue? It would require quite the transvaluation of values for limitless self-regard to commend itself as an edifying trait. And however one defines love, surely trust must be reckoned an essential component. But how can one trust a whole people? It's difficult enough in life to find a handful of "persons" in whom one can safely place one's faith and fate. Du Bois devoted the whole of his life to "his" people, to eradicating the color line. At the end of his life's journey, when his moment of truth was upon him as he was hounded by the U.S. government, Du Bois reports in page after painful page of his last *Autobiography* how so many of those whom he had nurtured, inspired, and guided prudently deserted and disowned him and the lifetime causes for which he fought and stood: "only a minority of the business and professional Negroes of Harlem attended my birthday dinner after the indictment was known. Of the 50 presidents of Negro colleges, every one of which I had known and visited—and often many times as speaker and advisor—of these only one … publicly professed belief in my integrity before the trial; and only one congratulated me after the acquittal"; "the majority of the American Negro intelligentsia, together with much of the West Indian and West African leadership, shows symptoms of following in the footsteps of western acquisitive society, with its exploitation of labor, monopoly of land and its resources, and with private profit for the smart and unscrupulous in a world of poverty, disease, and ignorance, as the natural end of human culture." Did he despair of Humanity? On the debit side, a rift had opened up between Du Bois and "his" people:

> I lost my leadership of my race. It was a dilemma for the mass of Negroes: either they joined the current beliefs and actions of most whites or they could not make a living or hope for preferment. Preferment was possible. The color line was beginning to break. Negroes were getting recognition as never before. Was not the sacrifice of one man,

> small payment for this? Even those who disagreed with its judgment at least kept quiet. The colored children ceased to hear my name.

But, in a most unexpected sentence coming from him, Du Bois discovers amidst his sorrows a world beyond race and race solidarity, a world where his true friends lay:

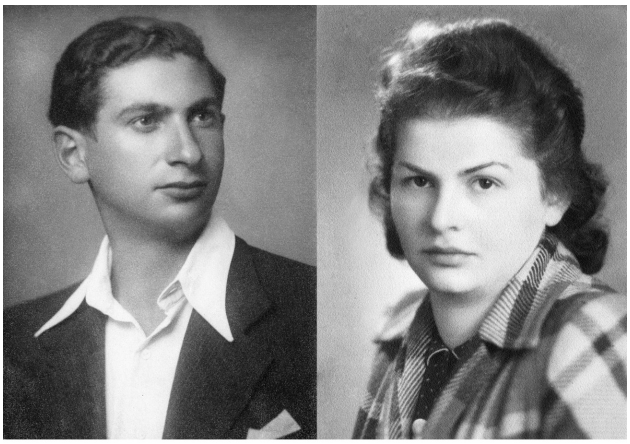
> I found new friends and lived in a wider world than ever before—a world with no color line.[633]

In my childhood growing up, my Mother often, if haphazardly, reflected out loud on her experience during the Nazi holocaust.[634] She told me the story of the Jewish commander of the Warsaw ghetto police who acted at the Nazis' behest. The first act of the Jewish resistance was to shoot him dead: "A sign was posted in front of his body, 'You lived like a dog. You died like a dog.'"[635] She told the story of how Jews used their bare hands and sheer ingenuity to construct a complex catacomb of bunkers in the ghetto to hide from the Nazis. "But to save themselves," my Mother would recall with a mixture of disbelief and disgust, "there were Jews who led the Nazis to the hidden bunkers of their own families!"[636] She told the story of how she had been abandoned by her extended middle-class family, but then found refuge and comfort in the bunker of the rough-hewn porters' union and the ghetto prostitutes. She told the story of the "scum" leaders of the *Judenräte* (Jewish councils) who told the Jews they were being "resettled" even as they were privy that the Jews were being shipped off to their extermination: "If we had known, at least we could have tried to resist."[637] She told the story of the Jewish smugglers and spies in the ghetto—"The Thirteen"[638]—in league with the Nazis who made merry while the others literally dropped dead "like flies" from hunger and typhus. And after my parents' death, I watched well-heeled Jewish lawyers and Jewish communal leaders, these ghouls and grave-robbers, wrap themselves in the martyrdom of my family as they prostituted

the Nazi holocaust into a multibillion dollar shakedown racket of Europe.

My Mother occasionally lectured in public on her experience during the war. Once, she was asked what the main lesson she learnt was. "There are good persons and there are bad persons," my Mother emphatically replied, "that's it!" She turned very bitter at the end of her life as her face was slowly eaten away by an undiagnosable cancer. In quick succession, she fired one home attendant after another. Until Clara. Clara was Polish. Although she had always made a point of despising Catholic Poles, my Mother would say of Clara, "She's like a sister to me." Her last words to my brother were, "Make sure to take care of Clara." In their goodness and badness, there exist only persons, not peoples.

"Traitors!"



My Beloved Parents

Except for my Mother and Father, every member of both my parents' families was exterminated during the war. From as far back as I can remember, our home was saturated with politics. On Sunday mornings, seated around the breakfast table, we divided up among the five of us the sections of the *New York Times* while, later in the day, we sat around the television set watching *Meet the Press*, hosted by the redoubtable Lawrence Spivak. But politics wasn't just intellectualizing words. When the nightly news flashed war images from Vietnam, my Mother would abruptly avert her gaze, hold her hand up to shield her eyes, and say: "Tell me when it's over." My parents stayed faithful to their decidedly unpopular political beliefs until their last breaths. They reserved their harshest epithet for those who betrayed their principles for earthly reward. "Traitors!" they would mutter, with a mixture of disdain and disgust.

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Part II

Academic Freedom

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If a man utters a downright lie or commits a daylight robbery or a murder, am I to call this brother of mine, as he most assuredly is, a liar or a thief or a murderer, or am I to use Churchillian language and say "he perambulates round the suburbs of veracity."... And if I were to use such circumlocutory speech, is there the slightest guarantee that I shall never hurt the party of whom I may be speaking? Harsh truth may be uttered courteously and gently, but the words would read hard. To be truthful you must call a liar a liar—a harsh word perhaps, but the use is inevitable.

—Gandhi

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Prefatory Note

What is academic freedom? It captures several discrete if in practice overlapping claims. *First*, academic freedom posits that academic peers are best suited to judge scholarly competence and accordingly that on all such determinations they should be granted professional autonomy. This component of academic freedom is designed to preempt extra-scholarly agendas tainting employment decisions. The great battles over academic autonomy in the U.S. were fought initially to free university life from the hold of clerical bias (sponsored by private denominations, American colleges were originally the "ward of religion"), then economic bias (in particular, corporate encroachment), and then political bias (the periodic Red Scares climaxing in McCarthyism).[639] *Second*, academic freedom posits that pursuit of Truth, the avowed end of a life in the ivory tower, presupposes as its necessary means liberty of speech. Truth, in its wholeness and its parts, on its surface and in its depth, cannot be attained, as every reader of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* will know, if obstacles impede the minds of those wanting to walk down paths of inquiry less traveled. *Third*, academic freedom has come to denote that, outside the ivory tower, a scholar should enjoy the ordinary right of a democratic citizen to speak their mind. Therefore, except in the rarest of instances, extramural utterances should not bear on the assessment of professional competence inside the academy. This right is arguably anchored in the U.S. Constitution and does not fall within the distinct purview of academic freedom. Indeed, academic freedom, a crucial component of which is certifying professional competence, and the First Amendment protection of free speech stand in an

antithetical relationship: the public square tolerates, even encourages, expression of every opinion regardless of its worth, whereas an academic journal is reserved for, and confers legitimacy on, those opinions that have passed muster among one's peers. "A scientific journal bound by First Amendment doctrine, and thus disabled from making necessary editorial judgments about the justification and truth of submissions," it has been observed, "could not long survive."[640] However, many of the most contentious milestones in the battle for academic freedom have involved a faculty member's extramural utterances, in particular, whether or not the speech at issue called into question their fitness to teach. It appears sensible, then, to include this extramural right under the rubric of academic freedom.[641]

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Chapter 7

Who's Afraid of Holocaust Denial?

Inspired as I still am by the radical convictions of my youth, I am resolutely conventional in my opinion of what should and shouldn't happen in the classroom. The 1915 inaugural statement of principles by the staid American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P.) strikes the right chords:[642]

> The university teacher, in giving instruction upon controversial matters, while he is under no obligation to hide his own opinion under a mountain of equivocal verbiage, should, if he is fit for his position, be a person of a fair and judicial mind; he should, in dealing with such subjects, set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators; he should cause his students to become familiar with the best published expressions of the great historic types of doctrine upon the questions at issue; and he should, above all, remember that his business is not to provide his students with ready-made conclusions, but to train them to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think intelligently.
>
> …
>
> The teacher ought also to be especially on his guard against taking unfair advantage of the student's immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher's own opinions before the student has had an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters in question, and before he has sufficient knowledge and ripeness of judgment to be entitled to form any definitive opinion of his own. It is not the least service which a college or university may render to those under its instruction, to habituate them to looking not only patiently but methodically on both sides, before adopting any conclusion upon controverted issues.

A lectern is not a soapbox, a classroom is not a political rally, a professor should not serve as a conveyer belt for a party line. His responsibility is to stimulate, not to dictate. Plato said, "The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful." It is not the worst maxim, although I prefer a slightly amended, less authoritarian

version: *The object of education is to teach us to love to think*[643]—while minds fully realized will probably agree on which objects of contemplation possess beauty.

It is fashionable nowadays on the political left to ridicule the notion of "balance" in the classroom. Philosopher Akeel Bilgrami asserts that, although in the privacy of his study a professor must scrutinize all the evidence on all sides of a question, in the classroom he is only obliged to present the results of his prior deliberation. Otherwise, in the name of balance, one is placed in the "nonsensical" position of allowing "equal presentation in the classroom of two contradictory views."

> No educator with any minimal rationality would do that on the elementary grounds that if there are two contradictory views, only one can be right. Of course if she cannot make up her mind on the evidence as to which one is right, she might present the case for both views evenhandedly. But presumably such undecidedness is an *occasional* phenomenon. If so, balance cannot be put down as a *requirement* for pedagogy in the classroom.
>
> …
>
> In our own pursuits toward the truth, we may be as confident in the truth of the deliverances of our investigations as is merited by the evidence in our possession, and we need feel no unnecessary urge to display balance in the classroom if we have shown balance and scruple in our survey of the evidence on which our convictions are based, the only place where balance is relevant in the first place. (emphases in original)[644]

I will restrict my comments here to the liberal arts[645] and broad generalizations.[646] The first point to note is the sniff of disapproval by the political left of balance—that is, to "set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators"—in the classroom. Just a few decades ago, the left was itself demanding balance in academic life. It was adduced as proof positive of political bias that Stanford University was the only elite university in the U.S. to tenure a Marxist economist (Paul Baran). Once the political weight on American campuses shifted leftwards, the plea for classroom balance came to be disparaged by its former leftwing proponents and seized upon by its former rightwing

opponents.[647] The politics of balance aside, what are the pedagogical merits of this demand? "There are," Bertrand Russell observed, "always good arguments on both sides of any real issue."[648] If, on most contentious topics, arguments can be made on both sides, then deciding which side made the better case is nearly always a matter of weighing and balancing, of preponderances, not absolutes. A consensus might currently exist on the evil of violent genocide and the inhumanity of chattel slavery, but no such consensus exists on the evil of capitalism, which arguably causes millions to perish each year from hunger and preventable diseases. Although the issue of torture once appeared closed, it has in recent times been reopened. So long as a hard consensus doesn't obtain on a great issue of the day, and so long as the received wisdom is subject to a compelling, vital counter-argument, a professor *should* feel obliged to make the best case for all sides, however he personally has, in the privacy of his study, resolved those "contradictory views," so as to enable students to do the mental heavy lifting—the weighing and balancing—*for themselves*. "No man can pass as educated who had heard only one side on questions as to which the public is divided," Russell wisely commented. "One of the most important things to teach in the educational establishment of a democracy is the power of weighing arguments, and the open mind which is prepared in advance to accept whichever side appears the more reasonable."[649] Discovery of the better argument on a disputed point, Russell's godfather, John Stuart Mill, memorably said, "has to be made by the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners" (*On Liberty*). A professor must play *both* combatants in the classroom—the advocate and the devil's advocate—while the student spectators actively engage, wrestle with the contending affirmations.[650] Consider the Israel-Palestine conflict. A broad academic consensus has crystallized (at any rate, in Middle East Studies programs) that the Zionist goal of establishing a Jewish state in

Palestine was morally indefensible. It's one thing to hold this opinion (it happens that I join in it). It's another thing to pretend that no arguments can be made on the Zionist side. In fact, rightwing Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky did make a credible moral case,[651] and one of my favorite classes when I taught the conflict was to challenge students to answer Jabotinsky after I emotively presented his brief. In general, the perfect teaching moment was one in which my presentation of contending opinions on a given topic was so finely balanced that students left class in a quandary as to where I stood. It often happened that students would drop by my office curious to find out. My stock reply was: "It's not so important what I think. What's important is what *you* think." It would even happen that I persuaded a student that Israel was in the right and the Palestinians in the wrong. (I confess to alloyed feelings on those occasions.) Insofar as few are capable of playing a full-fledged devil's advocate, i.e., making the very best case against their own beliefs, it is surely preferable that a student be exposed to those who are willing *from conviction* to argue, as it were, the devil's case. When the leftist tilt in the academy is decried, "campus radicals" smugly rejoin that "the political affiliation or religious belief of faculty simply ought not to matter."[652] But they *do* matter. Even when a professor recognizes and meets his formal obligation to effect (or affect) balance in the classroom, still he will rarely be as persuasive as a colleague whose heart is in sync with his mind—who professes the counter-argument not just from professional obligation but with the full force of his being. A disciple of Milton Friedman will almost always make a better argument for the free market than a disciple of Marx, while a devout Catholic will almost always make a better argument against abortion than a radical feminist. It might also be contended that a distinction should be made out between moral controversies, where balance is warranted, and the presentation of factual evidence, where it's not. But if a fact is clearly not in dispute—

Abraham Lincoln was born on 12 February 1809—it's not properly the subject matter, but rather the raw material, of teaching in higher education.[653] If a fact is widely contested, even if not in scholarly venues but only in popular publications—for example, *The Palestinians weren't expelled in 1948; they left of their own volition*—it's instructive to make a balanced presentation in the classroom so as to demonstrate the feeble evidentiary basis of the popular belief. If one aspires to dislodging falsehood and replacing it with truth, it requires openly confronting and persuasively responding to the falsehood. If the specifics of the falsehood are not engaged—*What about the Arab radio broadcasts exhorting Palestinians to flee?*—it will retain its hold. Not everyone will be convinced by a fair-minded presentation; but not everyone will be close-minded either.[654] Going a distance beyond Bilgrami, social historian Joan Scott asserts that imbalance in the classroom is not only inevitable but also a positive good: "taking positions ... is part of the scholar's job, part of what makes her a compelling and inspiring teacher"; "those positions are not neutrally arrived at by, say, balancing all sides until an objective view emerges; rather they are the result of some kind of deeply held political or ethical commitment on the part of the professor."[655] Even if, for argument's sake, it is granted that "taking positions" is a prerequisite to being a "compelling and inspiring teacher," still, it cannot be right that in the classroom a teacher should be inculcating her ideology-based "positions," supplemented by a selective culling of facts that support them. Shouldn't she, instead, be "balancing all sides," and allowing students on their own to do the weighing, from which an "objective view emerges" unique to each of them? Otherwise, it's hard to make out the difference between a "compelling and inspiring teacher" and a party hack, between pedagogy and indoctrination.[656]

* * *

The limiting case in the "balance" debate is Holocaust denial. It would make mockery of truth and academic freedom (it is said) if a university granted deniers a platform. But, to begin with, it's not obvious what exactly is being denied. Does the Nazi holocaust denote the extermination of European Jewry or all categories of people systematically put to and slated for death? If only Jews, then why? If the distinction is quantitative—fully 5-6 million Jews perished—why then does the Nazi holocaust enjoy a privileged status? As many as 25 million Russians and 20 million Chinese were killed during World War II, yet no red flags preempt free-wheeling debate on these lethal destructions. Further, if the singularity of the Nazi holocaust and the point at issue resides in the number killed, it's hard to figure why a taboo would be placed on Holocaust denial. Isn't the sensible thing simply to adduce the technical evidence supporting the widely accepted 5-6 million figure? But maybe it's the qualitative criterion of *how* that distinguishes the Nazi extermination: that is, the industrial-style/factory-like/assembly-line process culminating in the gas chambers and crematoria. However, only half of those Jews who died were killed in death camps.[657] Whereas Raul Hilberg focused on the bureaucratic, complex, "destruction process" in his monumental study, he nonetheless brackets the Nazi holocaust with the Rwandan genocide ("History had repeated itself"), even as the latter was carried out utilizing the most primitive of weaponry and organization.[658] Still, if the point of contention *is* the technique—say, the gas chambers—why not, then, just lay out the evidence and let it speak for itself? If the intended effect of the taboo on Holocaust denial is to suppress it, the actual effect is to arouse suspicion: *Why are deniers being muzzled if the evidence incontrovertibly belies their claims?* Indeed, the taboo can boomerang. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance defines Holocaust denial as, inter alia, "attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps

devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups."[659] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pinned ultimate culpability for the Nazi holocaust on the Palestinian Mufti of Jerusalem.[660] Should he then be barred from speaking in a college classroom on the Nazi holocaust?

When teaching *On Liberty*, I test Mill's strictures against a triptych of hypothetical scenarios, one of which is:

> A professor in our history department wants to devote one class of his introductory course on Modern Europe to the proposition that the Nazi holocaust never happened. It is a required lecture course, in which the professor doesn't field student questions. Should he be permitted to teach this class?[661]

The initial objections raised by my students are always the same. Doesn't the professor's silencing of the class contradict Mill? But, I reply, don't you listen to radio programs, watch television shows, and read books with which you vehemently disagree, even as you cannot physically dialogue with them? More often than not, the author of an offending text is no longer among the living. Does a rational person then stop his ears, switch stations, and shred the book, or does he attend to the unwelcome words, regardless of whether he gets in the last or even a first word? Still, the professor's one-sided presentation (it is said) contradicts Mill. But, I rejoin, aren't we bombarded with texts and images—not least in college course offerings—that validate the actuality of the Nazi holocaust? It can hardly be deemed a breach of balance if a single professor devotes a single class of a single course to disputing the incessantly articulated consensus wisdom. Once having disposed of these predictable demurrals, the real work begins.

What's the point of such a class if I know for certain that the Nazi holocaust happened? But you can't be certain of your belief until and unless you've heard out and answered any and all objections to it. Even a child, if his belief is challenged, knows enough of epistemology to

retort: *Prove me wrong!* If you want to rationally hug your certainty, you must first meet the challenge of every naysayer.

> *Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion, is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth…; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right.*
>
> *The beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded.*
> * The boxed quotes in italics are from *On Liberty*.

Even if you can marshal a mountain of supporting evidence, still, you can't *prefer* your belief to that of Holocaust deniers if you refuse even to give them a hearing. The maximum you can rationally claim is agnosticism; otherwise, your belief is based on personal prejudice, not truth.

> *He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion. The rational position for him would be suspension of judgment, and unless he contents himself with that, he is either led by authority, or adopts, like the generality of the world, the side to which he feels most inclination.*[662]

What's more, even if *you* don't harbor doubts, that can't entitle you to decide *for others* except if you're omniscient.[663] Once having acknowledged your human fallibility, you must also concede the possibility that you're mistaken, in which case your act of suppression could deny others the possibility of exchanging error for truth.

> *Those who desire to suppress* [an opinion]*, of course deny its truth; but they are not infallible. They have no authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging.... All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility.*

Even granting the facticity of the Nazi holocaust, it still repays to give deniers a platform. Just as the weight and depth of the credo *all men are created equal* (the other example I invoke to bring home Mill's point) "is not always clear,"[664] neither is the profundity of the Nazi holocaust. If layers of meaning lie buried in it (which I believe), then they can only be plumbed if the Nazi holocaust is "fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed." It is remarkable how quick the reflex to suppress Holocaust denial is, even as conjuring taboos will inevitably reduce this colossal human tragedy to a sterile mantra, an object of blind worship. While red lines cordoning off "The Holocaust" from the corrective of unfettered inquiry proliferate, one of the core postulates of "Holocaust education"—its "uniqueness"—appears to be in need of correction as it can't withstand rational scrutiny. Indeed, the current status of The Holocaust is replete with paradoxes: *on the one hand, a unique sanction is imposed on Holocaust denial—not even denial of climate change, which threatens the planet's very survival, is so sanctioned—while, on the other hand, demonstrating the "uniqueness" tenet of Holocaust education has proven elusive and, what's more, denying its uniqueness, or even juxtaposing it with other historical crimes—except to show that it can't be compared—is construed as a form of Holocaust denial!*[665] The more the taboos multiply, the more the Nazi holocaust is unmoored from time and space and is reduced to an object of idolatry.

> *However true it may be, if it is not fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed, it will be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth.*
>
> *Not only the grounds of the opinion are forgotten in the absence of discussion, but too often the meaning of the opinion itself. The words which convey it, cease to suggest ideas, or suggest only a small portion of those they were originally employed to communicate. Instead of a vivid conception and a living belief, there remain only a few phrases retained by rote; or, if any part, the shell and husk only of the meaning is retained, the finer essence being lost.*

The taboos enveloping the Nazi holocaust haven't only caused it to calcify into a lifeless ritual. What's worse, they've spawned a raft of spurious testimonial literature and preposterous pseudo-scholarship, the paradoxical outcome of which is to provide fodder for the deniers' mills.[666] If a self-proclaimed "Holocaust survivor" enjoys immunity from cross-examination—as does every Tom, Dick and Moishe pawning himself off as a survivor—the human propensity is toward exaggeration, which, if left unchecked, will harden into a lie.[667]

> *There is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend only to one that errors harden into prejudices, and truth itself ceases to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated into falsehood.*

It's also possible to get the big picture right yet some of the constituting facts wrong. If one is committed to the purity of truth, not just in its wholeness but also in its parts, then a Holocaust denier performs the useful function of ferreting out "local" errors, precisely because he is a *devil's* advocate—that is, fanatically committed to "unmasking" the "hoax of the 20th century." He consequently invests the whole of his being in scrutinizing every piece of evidence, not taking the minutest point for granted, passing a fine-tooth comb through each detail, until, in his monomaniacal zeal to expose an error, he inevitably stumbles upon one.

> *Even if the world is in the right, it is always probable that dissentients have something worth hearing to say for themselves, and that truth would lose something by their silence.*[668]

"If these people want to speak, let them," Hilberg counseled. "It only leads those of us who do research to re-examine what we might have considered as obvious. And that's useful."[669] If he was laid back when it came to Holocaust deniers, that's because Hilberg was confident in his conclusions based on his mastery of the source material. The

impulse to suppress springs not only from disgust at what Holocaust deniers outrageously proclaim, but also, and more often, from dread of one's inability to credibly answer them.[670] "Yes, there was a Holocaust," Hilberg once observed, "which is, by the way, more easily said than demonstrated."[671] If you've done your homework, then fielding obnoxious skeptics is at worst a form of intellectual amusement, the mental equivalent of shooting fish in a barrel.

The upshot is, by placing under a microscope and inspecting from every angle each scrap of evidence, the Holocaust denier is doing for you what you (if you are genuinely committed to truth) would have to do for yourself; the difference being, the denier's is the more probing examination, as it's much harder to argue against yourself once you've settled into or developed a vested interest in your belief. Thus, far from suppressing Holocaust deniers, one should be *grateful* to them for —however unwittingly—facilitating the quest for truth.

> *If there are any persons who contest a received opinion, or who will do so if law or opinion will let them, let us thank them for it, open our minds to listen to them, and rejoice that there is someone to do for us what we otherwise ought, if we have any regard for either the certainty or the vitality of our convictions, to do with much greater labor for ourselves.*

The obvious rejoinder to the Millian argument is: it's well and good to let Holocaust deniers ply their trade undisturbed in the public square, and even to be tolerant should a campus organization invite them to speak, but doesn't a different set of rules apply to the classroom? Just as one's peers must vet the scholarly merit of texts submitted for publication (otherwise academia degenerates into a haphazard free-for-all), so a history professor must vet the subject matter of his course offering: economies of time preclude inspecting a critical historical event from every possible angle. How can it be justified to squander even one class of one course on a quack proposition? It's surely legitimate (it will be said) to debate whether the American Civil War

was fought over rival economic systems or slavery, or whether chattel slavery is better or worse than wage slavery. Likewise, many basic questions regarding the Final Solution have not yet been resolved; indeed, controversy still swirls around *when* it began and *why* Hitler implemented it. But wouldn't debating whether or not the Final Solution happened be as frivolous as debating whether or not slavery existed in the antebellum South? Cast thusly, the question answers itself. However, there's a critical difference. Those inveighing against "balance" and gesturing to Holocaust denial as proof positive that balance is absurd, simultaneously allege that Holocaust denial constitutes an incipient or even imminent danger in society.[672] But if it poses so grave a threat among the general population,[673] how else can it be dislodged except by directly confronting it, not in a straw-man version that won't persuade, but in its most sophisticated and compelling version, espoused by the devil's advocate himself?

> *Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. That is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the subject has to encounter and dispose of; else he will never really possess himself of the portion of truth which meets and removes that difficulty.*

The answer surely can't be to suppress Holocaust denial by resort to censorship or force majeure. The university's purpose is the search for truth, not the imposition of "correct" ideas. It's also nearly impossible to physically stamp out an "incorrect" idea, while, once gaining traction, it will spread with ease among a population ignorant of the arguments against it and consequently mentally disarmed to counter it.

> *To shut out discussion entirely is seldom possible, and when it once gets in, beliefs not grounded on conviction are apt to give way before the slightest semblance of an argument.*[674]

For argument's sake, two points already considered will be set aside: *first*, if "The Holocaust" doesn't denote a stable, discrete object, then Holocaust denial cannot be coherently suppressed; and *second*, that Holocaust denial largely comprises discrete factual assertions that can be disposed of with discrete factual rebuttals. Then the bottom line is this:

> **If Holocaust denial is a marginal phenomenon, then, in light of a faculty's responsibility to familiarize students, not with every last word on a subject, but only with "the *best published expressions* of … the questions at issue,"[675] it shouldn't be taught in a college classroom because it doesn't figure in current academic debates on the genesis and contours of the Nazi holocaust; although deniers do perform, albeit inadvertently, a valuable function in society at large, such that it would hamper the pursuit of truth to suppress them altogether.**
>
> **If, however, Holocaust denial does constitute an actual or potential contagion, then it should be taught, ideally by Holocaust deniers, if only to inoculate students.**

To profess, however, that Holocaust denial shouldn't be taught *and* that it poses a clear and present danger defies reason. Or, put otherwise, if Holocaust denial shouldn't be taught, it must be, not only because of economies of time, but also because it presents no danger.

Fighting Holocaust Denial with a Mailed Fist

Legal scholar Stanley Fish suggests that Holocaust deniers pose a serious danger.[676] To counter their nefarious influence, however, he counsels against reasoning with them. Instead, "one must denounce them, ridicule them, harass them, and … make the bastards pay." Ignoring the mock heroics, does Fish make a persuasive case for suppressing Holocaust deniers?

Although he states that "the Holocaust certainly did occur … as a matter of fact …[and] conclusive evidence," Fish goes on to assert that rational proof can't decide the actuality of the Nazi holocaust: "deniers' pages are no less full of evidence and reasoning … everyone has evidence; the problem is that one man's evidence is another man's rationalization or fabrication." If he's nonetheless convinced that the Nazi holocaust did happen, it's not because of the rational exposition of facts, but, on the contrary, because of an ingrained disposition preceding proof and independent of it: "I grew up in a culture (postwar, American and Jewish) where the Holocaust (then not named) was a given…. That's the way it is with evidence; it doesn't just sit there unadorned and unencumbered asking for your independent evaluation; it sits in the midst of a structure (of belief and conviction) that precedes it and colors one's reception of it"; "historians achieve credibility by telling a story that fits with the stories we already know to be true and telling it in ways that correspond to our by now intuitive and internalized sense of how one connects the dots between observations on the way to a conclusion." What is the upshot? He has, by his own admission, adopted "like the generality of the world, the side to which he feels most inclination."[677] Even if Fish's belief happens to be true, it's still "a prejudice, a belief independent of, and proof against, argument…. This is not knowing the truth. Truth, thus held, is but one superstition the more, accidentally clinging to the words which enunciate a truth."[678] In a word, from the vantage point of truth-*seeking*—that is, truth not just as the "correct answer" but also as a method or process—Fish's affirmation of the Nazi holocaust does not

differ a whit from the denier's gainsaying of it: both are at bottom anchored in prejudice and superstition.

Even if the belief to which he is predisposed might be false, Fish further maintains, it's of no account. On the one hand, it's anyhow impossible to be certain of one's beliefs, and, on the other, pursuing such certitude enables Holocaust denial. Here's his reasoning. *First*, "intellectual responsibility does not require us to be absolutely certain of the truths we affirm," according to Fish, "only to be certain that the truths we affirm square with the evidence provided by our best lights," while "the burden of proof" falls on the Holocaust deniers who dispute the received wisdom. It's hard, however, to make sense of this. Whereas claiming certainty would, of course, be presumptuous, it is still possible to make a good-faith effort by entertaining all evidentiary challenges. Otherwise, the life of the mind wouldn't differ from shooting the bull. But Fish proclaimed that factual evidence was beside the point: belief precedes evidence, while the latter is inevitably cherry-picked to fortify the former. How then can "the truths we affirm" be said to "square with the evidence provided by our best lights," if belief precedes and "colors one's reception" of evidence—that is, if our predetermined "truths" are not and cannot be anchored in an unbiased weighing of evidence? Wouldn't "our best lights," on whose "evidence" we supposedly depend, be those who espouse "truths" we already agree with? What's more, even the "truths" of "our best lights" must, on Fish's account, be predetermined and arrived at independently of the evidence, so if our "truth" about the Nazi holocaust squares with their "truth," it's just one's prejudice squaring with another's superstition. And how can Holocaust deniers bear the "burden of proof" if both Holocaust deniers *and*

Holocaust affirmers allegedly harbor their beliefs independent of rational proof? *Second*, "establishment of a truth … invulnerable to challenge" is unattainable, according to Fish, while "in the gap between that unrealizable standard of proof and what can be proven according to standards less severe, there is room for all the little maneuvers deniers so skillfully employ—insisting that all points of view, and especially theirs, should have a fair hearing and not be discounted until they have been proven to be absolutely false…; raising questions … that cannot be definitively answered, and arguing that until they are answered the issue must remain open." It might be thought truisms of rational inquiry that "all points of view" should be given "a fair hearing," and that "questions … that cannot be definitively answered … must remain open." What Fish denotes sinister "little maneuvers" are in fact elementary inherencies in the pursuit of truth: to reserve judgment before and not to decide a point until after dissenting opinion has been heard; not to once and for all foreclose debate if the evidence is contradictory or ambiguous. It perplexes why Fish advocates suspension of the ordinary precepts of reasoned argument. Whence the burning necessity of this resort to "emergency" measures—disallowing uncongenial points of view, deciding a question even if the evidence is inconclusive —if, according to him, Holocaust denial is transparently ridiculous? If Fish counsels against hearing out Holocaust deniers, it's because, beyond their subterfuges, they don't actually believe in rational debate: "When your opponent is only pretending to play your game so that he can subvert it and pervert it, you have every right … to walk away and refuse him the advantage of engagement." Fish, however, forgot his own first premise: "Neither party reaches its

conclusion by sifting the evidence on the way to determining the truth of the matter; rather, each begins with a firm conviction of what the truth of the matter is, and then from inside the lens of that conviction receives and evaluates (the shape of the evaluation is assured) the assertion of contrary truths." Put otherwise, *no one* believes in evidence; *everyone's* beliefs are situated in "a structure (of belief and conviction) that precedes it"; *everyone* acts out of prejudice and superstition. Whereas Fish strikes the pose of occupying the intellectual high ground (don't lower yourself by debating a denier; walk away), isn't it his contention that, when it comes to "evidence and reasoning," both Holocaust deniers *and affirmers* are "pretending"?

If belief precedes evidence, and if the latter is always selectively culled to shore up the former, then belief must be impregnable against evidence. But then how does one rationally combat the danger posed by Holocaust denial? Fish repeatedly counsels reliance on the vast authoritative corpus of … evidence:

> Rely without apology on the ordinary, tried and true, sources of authority—government agencies, official commissions of inquiry, standard works of scholarship, and the received wisdom of professional bodies and associations.
>
> What you do is stand on your past experience, which includes the collective experience of the historical profession, mark the distance between what it tells you with all of the authority of many previous scholarly findings and what the denier now tells you.
>
> Where then is the difference that can be seized and provide the basis for victory? The answer lies in a fact everywhere noted…: the vast majority of mainstream researchers support Holocaust affirmers and reject Holocaust deniers … just go with the privileged position you already enjoy by belonging to a pre-eminent and powerful guild.

The contradictions between Fish's premises and his protocol leap from the page. If the corpus of accumulated scholarly wisdom commands authority, that's because it emerged from an impartial search for truth. If it were simply cherry-picked evidence designed to buttress a predetermined doctrine, it would be as persuasive as the Soviet Institute of Marxism-Leninism's *History of the Bolshevik Revolution*. But having denied the epistemological possibility of an impartial search for truth, Fish's authoritative "scholarly findings" must consist only of selective evidence, which won't convince anyone except those already convinced. What's more, however authoritative it might be, evidence-based scholarship can't, according to Fish, convince anyone, because belief precedes evidence; it is thus an impotent weapon in the battle against Holocaust denial. What Fish must then be saying is: *We should go through the motions of adducing evidence that burnishes our prejudice and superstition, in order to justify the suppression of another's prejudice and superstition—"ridicule them, harass them, … and make the bastards pay"—even if our evidence does not and cannot prove anything.* If his strategy works, it's because Fish has, not truth, but popular opinion and State power behind him. It's the victory of a belief grounded not in superior right but in superior might. If Holocaust denial will have been vanquished, it would be a victory, on his terms, not of truth but of the mailed fist masquerading as truth.

Fish proceeds to resolve the vexed question of whether academic freedom entitles deniers to teach at a university. He, unsurprisingly, replies in the negative. He also purports that this conclusion of his cannot be reconciled with the Millian notion of academic freedom, according to which there's an "obligation to take seriously every proposed viewpoint or

thesis no matter how outlandish or repugnant to received opinion." (The quoted phrase is Fish's paraphrase of the Millian position.) In fact, it's tenable to honor Millian principles and still not teach Holocaust denial, so long as the questions posed by Holocaust deniers do not figure on the current scholarly agenda; that is, if the questions posed by Holocaust deniers have already been adequately addressed and disposed of, then, given economies of time, they can be excluded from the curriculum. But if one starts from Fish's premise that Holocaust denial is a "virus" in our midst, then the case for silencing a Holocaust denier, even—or especially—on a college campus is much harder to make. How can Holocaust denial be rationally combatted if it's not first given a fair hearing, and who is better qualified to present the argument than a Holocaust denier? In any event, Fish proposes his own account of academic freedom to justify a ban on Holocaust denial in the academy. He dubs it "guild protectionism"—that is, the prerogative, indeed, the absolute necessity, of a faculty to cleanse its ranks of "incompetent" and "unworthy" members. Whence arises this right of a faculty to purge its ranks? Fish grounds it in "the massive record of rigorous research undertaken by superbly credentialed men and women whose conclusions have met every reasonable test put to them"; "the guild of mainstream historians [that] is not corrupt and goes about its business with dedication and integrity"; the academic guild's "track record of performance that includes tried and true procedures, carefully administered requirements for accreditation, widely accepted standards, and publicly recognized achievements." In other words, if reputable research overwhelmingly affirms the actuality of the Nazi holocaust, then deniers of it have lost

title to an academic appointment. Fish seems not to have noticed, however, that if dispositive value attaches to "rigorous research," "dedication and integrity," "tried and true procedures," "requirements for accreditation," "widely accepted standards," and "recognized achievements," that's because these protocols and principles exemplify different aspects of the rational, Millian pursuit of truth. Thus, if a faculty decides that a colleague is undeserving of the protections of academic freedom, and if this decision should be deemed dispositive, that's because the faculty has demonstrated by its professional track record that it is beholden to and reached its determination on the basis of truth. But, to the contrary, Fish posits that his notion of guild protectionism "does not bother itself much with theories of truth," and he explicitly sets it against the "writings of Mill and other Enlightenment rationalists."[679] If a faculty commands the authority to silence Holocaust deniers, then it can only spring, on Fish's account of academic freedom, and however much he might protest otherwise, from raw power. What Fish calls "guild protectionism" usually goes by another name: *mafia* protectionism.

The nearest Fish comes to making a coherent statement is this:

> A difference in the philosophical account of a practice (unless that practice is philosophy itself) does not dictate a difference in the practice of the practice, although it might dictate a change in the way you talked about the practice when you weren't practicing it but talking about practicing it.[680]

It can't but be wondered whether Fish cribbed this from a lecture by Morris Zapp.[681]

* * *

If living a virtuous life only required the rigorous application of received principles, it might not be easy, but it would be pretty straightforward: just do it. It's not, however, quite so obvious. In the real world, moral imperatives often clash. How, then, to proceed requires recourse to the faculty of *judgment*. If a public figure commands moral authority, it owes not to his dogmatic or mechanical application of categorical imperatives—although not lying, without qualification, on matters of public concern would appear to be a sine qua non—but, rather, to his track record in morally equivocal situations of sound judgment, itself born of some combination of deep learning, contemplation, and experience. One turns to such a figure for counsel precisely because the answer cannot be found on a tablet or in a catechism. Committed as he might be to academic rigor, a professor, too, must exercise judgment in the classroom. Whereas the pursuit of truth must be the overarching purpose of education, in a classroom composed of students, many of whom carry a heavy load of emotional baggage and are scarred by every manner of psychic wound, it's not always clear what material to present and how to present it. Truth is a fundamental value, but what if its pursuit engenders so oppressive an environment that a student cannot learn? Does a countervailing imperative such as kindness or compassion then come into play? The reflexive response is to invoke the adage, *Truth is a bitter pill to swallow*. If a college grants a student entry into its hallowed halls, isn't the tacit bargain that he will abide utterances that might offend or even outrage him? Thus, the A.A.U.P. rejects the notion that, in order to avoid creating a "hostile learning environment," a professor should self-censor. On the contrary, it states that such a restriction

> assumes that students have a right not to have their most cherished beliefs challenged. This assumption contradicts the central purpose of higher education, which is to challenge students to think hard about their own perspectives, whatever those might

> be. It is neither harassment nor discriminatory treatment of a student to hold up to close criticism an idea or viewpoint the student has posited or advanced. Ideas that are germane to a subject under discussion in a classroom cannot be censored because a student with particular religious or political beliefs might be offended. Instruction cannot proceed in the atmosphere of fear that would be produced were a teacher to become subject to administrative sanction based upon the idiosyncratic reaction of one or more students.[682]

Were pedagogy only so simple. Although externally imposed, categorical speech codes and their various spin-offs ought to be eschewed as they chill the pursuit of Truth, a professor is inevitably confronted by fraught, situation-specific occasions, not amenable to administrative fiat, when he must balance many factors before deciding how or even whether to proceed. When teaching the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*, I would illustrate aspects of Rousseau's indictment of "civilized" men—"the monstrous mixtures they eat, their pernicious seasonings, their corrupted foodstuffs ... the epidemic illnesses ... occasioned by the delicacy of their way of life"—by pointing to fast foods-cum-obesity. But as a student in my class one semester was morbidly obese, I hesitated whether to parse this passage. I decided to skip it. The *Discourse* was rich in teachable material; nothing essential would be lost if I omitted this particular theme in class. The most fraught subject matter bears on race. If every African-American student ambled into class with a robust sense of self, it wouldn't pose a dilemma. In his *Autobiography*, W. E. B. Du Bois recalls studying under nationalist German historian Heinrich von Treitschke, whom he described as his "most interesting" professor:

> One day he startled me by suddenly declaring during a lecture on America: "*Die Mulatten sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig.*" [Mulattoes are inferior! They feel themselves inferior.] I felt as if he were pointing me out; but I presume he was quite unaware of my presence. However my presence or absence would have made no difference to him. He was given to making extraordinary assertions out of a clear sky

> and evidently believing just what he said. My fellow students gave no evidence of connecting what he said with me. Yet von Treitschke was not a narrow man.[683]

Du Bois took the outburst in stride and didn't rue taking the course; indeed, he revealed himself to be a generous student. But he's clearly the exception to the rule. When teaching the *Second Treatise of Government*, I would first note that Locke sanctioned violent revolt if a state formally governed by the rule of law manifestly perverted it;[684] and then posit the Los Angeles "riots" after the Rodney King verdict, which exonerated the police of wrong-doing, as an example of Locke's point. Once, the class's only vocal conservative took umbrage: "The police felt threatened by King; it wasn't racism." The class's only African-American then broke down in hysterical sobbing. What was I to do? I decided that on balance the conservative should have his say. Both of them felt "oppressed" at the university (it was overwhelmingly white, but also stiflingly liberal), thus cancelling out each other's personal grievances. That left the point of principle: the conservative had a right to express his opinion, however much it might give offense. But things can get trickier still. Truth be told, it's just not humanly possible to teach some material. I once assigned Winthrop D. Jordan's classic *White over Black* as a basic text in a course on African-American history.[685] It would be awkward enough making Jordan's point that "the Negro's homeland was the habitat of the animal which in appearance most resembles man … it happened that Englishmen were introduced to the anthropoid apes and to Negroes at the same time and in the same place … it was virtually inevitable that Englishmen should discern similarity between the man-like beasts and beast-like men of Africa." But a pedagogy has yet to be invented that can teach that, in Elizabethan folklore, "Negro men … sported 'large Propagators'" and "Members [of] extraordinary greatness," "Mandingo men were 'furnisht with such members as are after a sort burthensome unto them'"; while in England's North American

colonies, it was commented upon, "black boys how well they are hung."[686] After much soul-searching and drenched in a torrid sweat, I decided to take a pass on teaching these "themes" in class. Still, the toughest call is whether or not to broach the subject of race and I.Q. A belief in the mental inferiority of African-Americans is lodged in the collective psyche of white America—and, truth be told, of Black America as well. To rationally parse the evidence on a deeply held prejudice would appear to be the perfect classroom exercise. Except that the scientific evidence may not unequivocally vindicate the "politically correct" side. The pursuit of truth might then end up fortifying a prejudice with tidbits of scientific data. An African-American student already beleaguered in an overwhelmingly white class, and made yet more disconsolate by such a debate, would then have to suffer yet another blow of a less-than-resounding resolution in his favor. The A.A.U.P.'s edict issued from on high offers no guidance in such real-life teaching dilemmas, where the commandment to pursue truth often bumps up against other compelling considerations. A teacher must then rely on a finely calibrated faculty of judgment to effect the right balance between the noble calling of his profession and the inevitable mitigations of exigent circumstance.

Replacing Repressive Speech Codes with Repressive Public Opinion

The ostensible purpose of campus speech codes is to shield vulnerable minorities from verbal abuse. Whether it achieves this end is an open question. In fact, mandatory "civil" discourse might inflict more psychological damage than loutish speech.[687] Be that as it may, the A.A.U.P. opposes curbs on campus-wide speech on the same grounds that it opposes curbs on classroom speech: their chilling effect. It cannot be

doubted that "political correctness" has hampered free-wheeling intellectual debate,[688] but it has also fostered a more humane campus discourse by barring gratuitous verbal blows. The challenge is how to preserve the civility without its mentally stultifying side effects. Alas, the A.A.U.P.'s resolution of this dilemma lacks efficacy: on the one hand, it fails to make basic distinctions even as they are warranted and tenable (if not totally free of possible abuse), while, on the other hand, far from resolving it, the A.A.U.P.'s prescription merely displaces the dilemma. Ironically, whereas its purpose is to preserve free speech, the A.A.U.P.'s approach probably does more harm than the harm it seeks to redress.

In its formal position paper, *On Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes*, the A.A.U.P. states that

> rules that ban or punish speech based upon its content cannot be justified. An institution of higher learning fails to fulfill its mission if it asserts the power to proscribe ideas—and racial or ethnic slurs, sexist epithets, or homophobic insults almost always express ideas, however repugnant.[689]

It's hard to make out what "ideas" lie buried in "Fuck you, bitch," "Die, Nigger, die," or "Goddamn faggot." If it is granted that "the shock and sense of affront, and sometimes the injury to mind and spirit, can be as great from words as from some physical attacks" (Supreme Court Justice Powell, in *Rosenfeld v. New Jersey*, 1972), and if it is granted that the proscription of such epithets, as they are devoid of ideational content, would not defeat a university's mission, then, *pace* A.A.U.P., they should be verboten on campus.[690] This prohibition, it must however be admitted, would cover only a tiny portion of potentially invidious campus speech. The danger also lurks of the slippery slope. Where and how does one draw the line? Should "Zionist scum," "fascist pig" and "capitalist

bloodsucker" also be banned? None of these epithets is strictly ad hominem as each refers back to a putatively noxious ideology but, still, they hover between a thought-defying imprecation and an inchoate idea. It is to avoid having to make such distinctions that the A.A.U.P. aligns itself against campus speech codes.[691] Still, the A.A.U.P. is not oblivious to the other horn in the dilemma: verbal hammer blows directed against a vulnerable, estranged minority can render intolerable its living situation. Its solution is to foster a moral ambience in which such crudity and cruelty would be condemned and the exponents of such meanness ostracized:

> Colleges and universities should stress the means they use best—to educate—including the development of courses and other curricular and co-curricular experiences designed to increase student understanding and to deter offensive or intolerant speech or conduct. These institutions should, of course, be free (indeed, encouraged) to condemn manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, whether physical or verbal. The governing board and the administration have a special duty not only to set an outstanding example of tolerance, but also to challenge boldly and condemn immediately serious breaches of civility. Members of the faculty, too, have a major role; their voices may be critical in condemning intolerance, and their actions may set examples for understanding, making clear to their students that civility and tolerance are hallmarks of educated men and women.[692]

Yet, such a prescription merely displaces the dilemma. If by its adoption robust speech would not be fettered by the "tyranny of the magistrate," still, it would be constrained by a mob-like "tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling" (J. S. Mill's phrases). The A.A.U.P. appears blissfully unaware of how imprecise its counsel is, on the one hand, and how potentially chilling of free speech it is, on the other. Who is to decide what constitutes "offensive or intolerant speech" deserving of condemnation by the university community? If a Catholic pro-life student, believing that abortion amounted to

infanticide, expresses support for the extra-judicial execution of an abortion doctor, should he be publicly censured? But John Brown, also a religious zealot, murdered in cold blood pro-slavery settlers (in Kansas), yet he was immortalized in the eponymous Civil War song, "John Brown's Body," while both Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois extenuated Brown's resort to lethal violence.[693] Who's to say that today's doctor-executioner isn't yesterday's John Brown? If a Palestinian student, whose family lives in Gaza, expresses support for Hamas projectile attacks on Israel, should she be publicly chastised? It might be supposed that most U.S. campus administrators and faculty would say yes, indeed, would see it as their "special duty" to denounce her.[694] But if Hamas firing rinky-dink "rockets" at Israel is wrong,[695] then isn't Israel's internment of the people of Gaza, half of whom are children, in a "concentration camp"[696] ten thousand times more wrong? If it does not admit of a ready answer what constitutes "offensive and intolerant" speech, then it must be conceded that valuable free speech might be truncated as overwhelming campus opprobrium chills, not "offensive and intolerant," but what in fact is *unpopular* speech. The dissenter will be ostracized; those in agreement with the dissenter will think twice before voicing their support. Conversely, A.A.U.P. recommends the virtues of "civility and tolerance." But would such open-mindedness extend to a campus chapter of the K.K.K. or Proud Boys? It might not necessarily endorse Leon Trotsky's injunction per fascists—"acquaint them with the pavement a few times"[697]—but A.A.U.P. would almost certainly construe theirs to be "offensive or intolerant speech" undeserving of "civility and tolerance." Still, it would almost certainly exhort "civility and tolerance" if Hillel International

opened a campus chapter, even as the Hillels routinely justify Israel's internment of 1,000,000 children in Gaza concentration camp. The inescapable fact is, "offensive or intolerant speech," "civility and tolerance"—these are value-laden locutions. If, in the name of "civility and tolerance," the force of campus opinion is harnessed in condemnation of "offensive and intolerant speech"—which, as a practical matter, almost always reduces to an unpopular opinion—it's no less intellectually stifling than legally proscribed taboos, and arguably more stifling. "Subtle and refined danger is always more to be apprehended," John Dewey observed, "than a public and obvious one."[698] It's easier to fight against codified speech restrictions than against "enlightened" campus opinion, which, in the name of its "special duty," insinuates itself in campus life and throttles free speech with its asphyxiating pieties. But if both speech codes and the force of public opinion ought to be shunned, how, then, can a vicious idea propagated on campus be combatted? A university setting would not appear to be a special case. In general, if an idea is perceived to be obnoxious, and it presents a political danger as it's gaining currency, instead of legally banning it or galvanizing an enlightened mob to anathematize it, the better strategy is to engage the idea in order to demonstrate, calmly and coolly, its falsity. A rational proof probably won't win over the idea's exponent, but it stands a better than even chance of winning over the broad public. That, at any rate, is the premise and hope of a radical politics rooted in reason and truth, and on no other soil can a truly radical politics blossom forth.

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Chapter 8

Do Pervs and Pinkos, Ravers and Rabble-Rousers Have a Right to Teach?

Except for the chilling effects of cancel culture, academia is a remarkably tolerant place. If your opinions and carryings-on stay confined within the ivory tower's walls; if you stick to speaking only at academic conferences and publishing only in academic journals; if you honor basic, accepted norms of conduct such as not sleeping with your student(s) and being formally respectful of your academic colleagues—then, pretty much anything goes. Rightwing commentators who bemoan liberal bias in the humanities are not far off the mark: the range of the permissible in disciplinary offerings extends out to infinity, some would say *negative* infinity; the freakier, the better. It's when a professor steps out of the classroom and off the campus that troubles loom. The most numerous, contentious, and notorious breaches of a professor's academic freedom have implicated speech not within but outside the university's walls. These cases pose the question of what limits can legitimately be placed on how a professor deports himself in the public arena. If this issue arises less frequently than one might expect, it is because political speech is broadly protected, the public is broadly tolerant of marginal lifestyles, and most self-described "radical" academics inhabit a woke cocoon world, one in which they construe naming their pronouns to be a daring political statement. The rest of humanity, in its infinite wisdom, yawns.

The position of the American Association of University Professors (A.A.U.P.) on public civility, which effectively sets the professional (but not legal) standard, has undergone subtle changes over time:

- 1915—*Declaration of Principles.* The section devoted to "extramural utterances" walks a fine line: on the one hand, it obliges faculty to acquit themselves in public in the scientific spirit ("avoid hasty or unverified or exaggerated statements … refrain from intemperate or sensational modes of expression"), but, on the other, it underlines that a professor should enjoy the same free speech protections as any other citizen. It allows for "occasional cases" where a professor's excessive public utterance might be liable to "definite disciplinary action," but only if this is decided by his academic peers, who alone possess the competence to judge him. In addition, it makes out a distinction within the principle of academic freedom between "freedom of utterance" or form, which is bounded (as it should be tempered by scholarly objectivity), and "freedom of thought, of inquiry" or content, which is unbounded.[699]

- 1940—*Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure.* The relevant section underscores that when professors "speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline." But it also points to their "special obligations" redounding from the public's perception of them as representatives of "their profession and their institution." They "should" accordingly strive to be "accurate," exercise "restraint," show "respect for the opinions of others," and make clear in their public utterances that "they are not speaking for the institution" to which they are affiliated.[700] Immediately after it endorsed the 1940 Statement, the A.A.U.P. entered the clarifying caveat that if a university administration is of the opinion that a professor has violated these obligations, it can press charges for dismissal, but it must bear in mind that "teachers are citizens and should be accorded the freedom of citizens."[701]

- 1964—*Statement on Extramural Utterances*. The relevant section, which was the A.A.U.P.'s last authoritative declaration on extramural utterances, moves the balance further to the side of a professor's full speech rights as a citizen: "The controlling principle is that a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member's unfitness to serve. Extramural utterances rarely bear upon the faculty member's fitness for the position. Moreover, a final decision should take into account the faculty member's entire record as a teacher."[702]

The essence of the A.A.U.P.'s evolving position on public civility was, first, to recast *obligations*—what a professor must do—into *admonitions*—what a professor should do;[703] and, second, to reduce almost to nil the relevance of civility in assessing a faculty member's professional competence. A professor would be subject to disciplinary action only if (A) he violated an A.A.U.P. admonition on extramural speech, *and* (B) this violation of professional responsibility, even after it had been placed in the context of his entire professional career, still showed the faculty member's unfitness for the position. The phrase "fitness for the position" referred to the various roles of a faculty as teacher, researcher, and administrator. Thus, disciplinary action could kick in only if his violation of an A.A.U.P. standard on extramural speech demonstrably compromised his ability to fulfill his professional responsibilities.

* * *

The question of public civility has, historically, fallen into two broad categories: morals and politics. I will look at a pair of exemplary cases in each of these respective categories.[704]

Moral incivility (I): Bertrand Russell at the College of the City of New York

In 1940, the distinguished British philosopher Bertrand Russell was appointed to the philosophy department at the College of the City of New York.[705] The Catholic Church and rightwing political forces orchestrated a public hysteria targeting Russell's heretical opinions on morality. A lawsuit was filed by a private citizen against the City of New York to rescind Russell's appointment on the grounds of his being "lecherous, salacious, libidinous, lustful, venerous, erotomaniac, aphrodisiac, atheistic, irreverent, narrow-minded, untruthful, and bereft of moral fiber."[706] In short, he was alleged to be a pervert. His contested appointment cast the issue of public civility in a stark form: no one could seriously deny his professional attainments—indeed, his acceptance of the appointment at City College was hailed as "the education scoop of the year"[707]—but it also appeared beyond dispute that some of his social opinions did cross the line of public morality. The Russell case did not pose the question of style, but only of content. None of his detractors disputed that, on whatever topic he alit, Russell expatiated in the cadences and with the gravitas befitting a professor, not a rabble-rouser. Even his popular works displayed dazzling erudition conveyed in sublime prose. Despite an outpouring of support from his former students, leading lights of higher education, and the liberal public,[708] the court decided against Russell. Due to various legal technicalities and machinations, Russell was unable to appeal the verdict, and in fact was never able to testify on his own behalf.

Those advocating in Russell's defense pursued two complementary but not wholly consistent lines of defense. His supporters, such as famed American philosopher John Dewey, in the main argued that the accusations against Russell were distorted, false and defamatory, and that, to the contrary, he was in every respect a model of moral

rectitude—"a gentleman and a scholar," in Dewey's words.[709] "Exhibit A" for the prosecution, and the judge in his verdict, was "the filth" contained in Russell's *Marriage and Morals*.[710] Dewey defended the book on the grounds that the subject matter was approached with "high seriousness" and "in a scientific manner," and did not "advocate looseness of conduct."[711] The tacit subtext of Dewey's line of defense was that, *if* Russell himself or his opinions did egregiously breach moral norms, they *would be* grounds for stripping him of his academic post. To take one of many examples, Dewey was at pains to "disprove the contention that Mr. Russell was promoting and sponsoring the practice of masturbation."[712] But that prompts the question, *What if he was promoting and sponsoring it?* Russell himself could not have been pleased with Dewey's subtext as his advocacy did on occasion breach convention. It is perhaps why, although he also accused the court of having "slandered" him and of hurling "grossly untrue" accusations,[713] Russell hewed to the defense that his opinions on morality were altogether beside the point as he was hired to teach "modern concepts of logic," "foundations of mathematics," and "relations of pure to applied science." In other words, it was of no account even if his opinions *were* perverted. "I claim two things," he declared, "1. That appointments to academic posts should be made by people with some competence to judge a man's technical qualifications; 2. That in extra-professional hours a teacher should be free to express his opinions, whatever they may be."[714] And yet more provocatively, in a letter to the *New York Times*, which lent him only tepid support, Russell stated: "In a democracy it is necessary that people should learn to endure having their sentiments outraged."[715]

The judge decided against Russell on multiple grounds, some of them manifestly contrived.[716] The gravamen of his decision, however, homed in on Russell's immoral preachings. The judge contended that condoning blasphemies, such as premarital cohabitation, adultery and

—most appallingly—"the damnable felony of homosexuality,"[717] by a person of Russell's wit, charm and eminence, could lead young, impressionable minds under his tutelage astray, to the point that they would break the city's penal code prohibiting these practices.[718] "This appointment affects the public health, safety and morals of the community," the judge ruled,

> and it is the duty of the court to act. Academic freedom does not mean academic license. It is the freedom to do good and not to teach evil. Academic freedom cannot authorize a teacher to teach that murder or treason are good…. The appointment of Dr. Russell is an insult to the people of the city of New York…, in effect establishing a chair of indecency.[719]

However much the judge might have hyperbolized, the fact remains that Russell's opinions on sexual mores *did* constitute an outrage to much of contemporary public opinion.[720] The denials of his supporters sounded a false note. It was said that he didn't condone homosexuality.[721] This was patently untrue; he did.[722] It was said that a distinction should be made between condoning an act, such as homosexuality, which Russell clearly did, and approving of it, which he arguably didn't,[723] and that only the latter should be adjudged an offense. But is condoning a heinous act—think: rape or murder—such a leap from approving of it? It was said that, although he advocated that the statute prohibiting homosexuality be rescinded, he did not advocate its practice prior to legalization.[724] Even if this were true, which is doubtful,[725] it's an extenuation that only goes so far. If a professor were to pronounce in public that pedophilia is ethically unexceptionable, but that it shouldn't be indulged pending its legalization, a positive sanction has still been transmitted; if expressed by an esteemed professor, it can't but leave a powerful impression and be a powerful goad, a fillip to action.

The irony is, however much they detested each other, on the point of principle the judge and Russell's supporters did *not* disagree. The

judge started from the "basic principle" that a "teacher … not of good moral character" has no right to teach.[726] Russell's defenders did not dissent from this principle; instead, they upheld his moral rectitude.[727] The question thus remains, *Should a professor who expresses "outrageous" opinions on morality outside the classroom still have a right to teach?* Russell himself answered emphatically in the affirmative, whereas his supporters mostly evaded the question by skirting his verbal outrages.

Moral incivility (II): Leo Koch at the University of Illinois

In 1960, Dr. Leo F. Koch, a biology professor at the University of Illinois, was terminated by the administration after publishing a letter in the school paper. A feisty critique of prevailing sexual mores, the letter lambasted "the hypocritical and downright inhumane moral standards engendered by a Christian code of ethics which was already decrepit in the days of Queen Victoria." It went on to posit that "there is no valid reason why sexual intercourse should not be condoned among those sufficiently mature to engage in it."[728] After his letter triggered a firestorm of protests from the local community, Koch became the subject of investigation by multiple university bodies and then by the A.A.U.P.

First, the *University President* recommended that Koch be "relieved … of his duties immediately" on a trio of grounds: "the views expressed are offensive and repugnant, contrary to commonly accepted standards of morality"; "their public espousal may be interpreted as encouragement of immoral behavior"; "Mr. Koch's conduct has been prejudicial to the best interests of the University." Second, the *University Senate Committee on Academic Freedom* delivered a mixed verdict: the content of a faculty member's extramural expression, however "offensive and repugnant," was protected speech; the form in which Koch expressed himself *did* breach academic responsibility as it was not "in keeping with the dignity and responsibility of a scholar"; and, although his letter damaged the

public reputation of the university, invoking such a standard to discipline Koch would undermine academic freedom. The Committee recommended, on the one hand, that Koch "be reprimanded…, but not be discharged," and, on the other, that the school administration affirm its commitment to protecting controversial opinions, provided they are "made in conformity with the legal and statutory restraints imposed on a faculty member as a citizen, a teacher and a scholar." Third, an inquiry by the *University Board of Trustees* upheld the President's decision to terminate Koch, finding that his letter not only condoned but also encouraged students to engage in extramarital sex; the "language" of the letter lacked "those standards of temperateness, dignity, and respect for the opinions of others which should characterize public expression" by faculty members; the "language, tone, and contents of the letter" breached academic responsibility; and the letter "was clearly prejudicial to the best interests" of the university. Fourth, it became a point of contention whether the university terminated Koch on account of the content of his opinions or the form in which he expressed them.[729] A *Subcommittee of the University Board of Trustees* issued yet another report clarifying that the Board's brief against Koch "was not that he expressed … views which were 'offensive and repugnant,'… but was that his actions in writing the letter and securing its publication constituted" a breach of "academic responsibility." It went on to underscore the importance of the "*responsible* expression" (emphasis in original) of controversial moral opinions; "in determining whether expression of such an opinion is a 'responsible' one…, the circumstances surrounding, and media used in publicly expressing, the opinion, and the tone, content, and purpose of the public expression of it must be given due consideration."

The A.A.U.P.'s *Committee A*[730] eventually entered the fray. However, just as reaching a consensus proved elusive to the

constituent bodies of the university, so it proved elusive to the constituents of the A.A.U.P. An *Ad Hoc Committee* commissioned by Committee A to investigate the Koch case compiled and submitted a report. Whereas Committee A commended the Ad Hoc Committee's factual presentation, it noted a difference of opinion between it and the Ad Hoc Committee "on the validity of the standard of academic responsibility, and the application of such a standard in the Koch case." To be sure, they both agreed that Koch had a right to express his heterodox opinions on contentious moral issues, and that the harm such expression might have caused to the university did not constitute valid grounds for terminating him. The heart of their difference lay in the relevance and meaning of "responsible" speech. The A.A.U.P. Ad Hoc Committee found that the criterion of "academic responsibility" did not apply to extramural speech ("a faculty member should have the same right of expression as any other citizen … there is no requirement that the citizen speak with restraint, dignity, respect for the opinion of others, or even accuracy"); that such a "responsibility" standard could easily be misused to silence "any real discussion of controversial issues of either fact or opinion";[731] that "the concept of 'irresponsibility' is exceedingly vague," and would likely "be reserved as a sanction only for expression of unorthodox opinion"; that even if "academic responsibility"[732] were a relevant criterion for extramural speech, Koch's letter did not breach it as "nothing in the letter … constituted encouragement or espousal beyond what naturally adheres to a vigorous presentation of the ideas." The Ad Hoc Committee concluded that, not only was the indictment of the letter's style groundless,[733] but also that the claim that the style breached "academic responsibility" was a red herring. What truly exercised the university administration and moved it to discharge Koch, according to the Ad Hoc Committee, was the letter's content:

> Had the letter dealt with any subject other than sex mores, religion, or some other acutely sensitive area, its language and tone would have passed unnoticed…. We are convinced that fundamentally the objections of the Board of Trustees are directed against the "offensive and repugnant" views expressed, rather than the style of composition…. Once one excludes from consideration the "offensive" nature of the substantive ideas in Professor Koch's letter, as it is conceded the principles of academic freedom require,[734] the finding of a breach of academic responsibility because of language and tone seems to us wholly untenable.

A.A.U.P.'s Committee A, on the other hand, found that, elusive as the notion of "academic responsibility" might be, a faculty member's breach of it did make him amenable to disciplinary action: "The borderline between expression of views and the condoning, encouragement, or incitement of improper acts is tenuous and difficult to draw, but situations do occur in which a distinction must be made."[735] Committee A evidently did not limit the notion of "academic responsibility" merely to the form of expression, but, on the contrary, zoomed in on the content. It went on, however, to enter the critical qualification that "the initial and primary judgment of an accused individual's action rests with his colleagues" assembled in a faculty committee. Such a "procedural safeguard," it contended, would help prevent the abuse of "academic responsibility" for improper ends. It took no position on whether Koch's letter did in fact breach the standard of academic responsibility, although it came down squarely against his termination.

To coherently engage the Russell and Koch cases, one must pinpoint what exactly is at issue. First, the heart of both cases was the content, not the form, of the allegedly immoral extramural speech. In the Koch case, the university gainsaid this fact, claiming that it objected to the form, not the content of Koch's letter, but the A.A.U.P. Ad Hoc Committee persuasively argued that the denial was disingenuous; the worst that could be said of Koch's form was that it was juvenile. I will therefore focus on content here, and defer the question of form to the next section on political incivility, where it is

more salient. Second, the immoral speech was said to inflict harm in three distinct spheres: public morality; the institution to which the professor was affiliated; and the students under the professor's tutelage. The first of these harms—public morality—on its own clearly cannot justify curbing a professor's speech: the professor is a citizen, and immoral opinions are protected speech. The second of these harms—to the university—is, in my opinion, a consideration that a professor *should* take into account when exercising his protected speech. It's not enough to proclaim the right to speak one's mind, without taking into consideration, *as a factor*, the damage that might be inflicted on the university, in particular, on a public university that services a needy student population and is at the mercy of the tax-paying public. (A private university is, of course, vulnerable to the blackmail of alumni benefactors, but is generally in a better financial position to cushion the blows.) There's an odor of off-putting narcissism when a tenured professor, brandishing the principle of academic freedom, demands the right to speak as he pleases, however self-indulgent that speech might be, when it is not the professor but the university, and ultimately the students (if funding is cut), who will take the hit. It might not be incumbent on the professor to exercise self-censorship, but it does require peering outside the circumference of one's navel at how one's childish or otherwise thoughtless whimsy might cause harm to others.[736] Here, however, I want to focus on the potential adverse impact of a professor's immoral public utterances on his students.

A good place to begin is to quote a school administrator who contributed to a volume defending Russell, but with a critical caveat:

> Should a professor limit himself, or be limited? The strongest advocates of academic freedom are likely to answer No. Such absolutism, however, is theoretical, not realistic. As a *reductio ad absurdum*, think of trying to retain on any faculty teachers who openly advocate homosexuality—or the assassination of the President. …[T]here is always a limit. The teacher who thinks that this limit does not apply to him is not facing reality.

> The administrator must necessarily take this fact into account in employing and retaining faculty members. He must recognize that neither students nor the public will segregate a man's teachings in one field from his general teachings, his statements in class from his public pronouncements, his philosophy from his life. He must recognize that, whether or not it ought to be so, students and the public consider that the appointment of a teacher places a stamp of approval on him as a whole; it invests him with a prestige which seems to justify youth in considering him an example whom it might be well to follow. The teacher must be considered in his entirety. This does not mean that he must be a plaster saint, but it means that his assets must clearly outweigh his liabilities.[737]

The administrator makes what appears to be an unimpeachable point. A professor is more than a dispenser of knowledge; he is also a dispenser of wisdom. It might sound corny but, ideally, it also happens to be true. A student comes to office hours burdened not just with questions about his assignment but also with questions about his *life*. A student is expected to look up to and, more often than not, *does* look up to his professor, not just because of his professional competence, but also for his human insight. It might be said that a professor often acts *in loco parentis* at a critical stage in a young person's coming of age; he's left home, searching for answers to the eternal questions on his own, but still intermittently seeking a professor's guidance to help him along this unchartered leg in life's journey. The office he occupies confers on a professor an impalpable but nonetheless real aura of moral authority. That's why a professor who respects his calling feels so shattered when he has fallen, or allowed himself to fall, below the high moral bar set by his profession, and failed and fallen in the eyes of his students. That's also why a professor does feel an obligation to justify public statements that appear outrageous, rather than wave off ensuing criticism. Exactly how this element should figure in a decision whether or not to hire, tenure, or fire a faculty member might be as elusive as this unique responsibility of a professor. But those who deny it as a factor are, as the administrator correctly asserts, "not facing reality." It is also

implausible that a professor's venomous moral utterance can be partitioned off from and not ooze into his relationship with students. If a professor publicly defends ISIS rapes and slave auctions, can a female student not feel ill-at-ease in class, let alone in office hours—not because her preconceived ideas are being challenged, but because her moral being has been degraded? It would also be a curious anomaly to champion multicultural tolerance, political correctness, speech codes, and safe spaces, yet simultaneously espouse a professor's unqualified right to extramural utterances. How could it be that the *intra*mural statement of a faculty member must be vetted for its potential adverse impact on vulnerable minorities, whereas an *extra*mural statement would gain unqualified protection by virtue of a professor's rights as a citizen? Won't the extramural utterance, if read on a professor's personal blog or in a newspaper op-ed column, or free-floating on the web, also be experienced by a vulnerable student as oppressive? The line separating intramural from extramural utterances, so far as the impact of each on an exposed group, is more notional than real, porous than impermeable. To the point, although Koch was dismissed for writing a letter to the *school* paper, his case was confoundedly adjudicated as an exemplar of *extra*mural speech.[738] It's not at all obvious where—as it were, spatially—one's responsibility as an academic ends and one's right as a citizen begins. The reality is that this facet of academic freedom is more often than not honored in the breach. It doesn't make a whit of difference whether a noxious statement is uttered in a faculty meeting or personal conversation, on a personal or professional blog, on university or personal email. It is held to be so revelatory of the person's moral turpitude as to be an indictable offense demanding of action, wherever and however it was articulated. When Harvard University president Larry Summers seemed to disparage the mental aptitude of women in the natural sciences at a small seminar, he was drummed out of office.[739] When

Nobel laureate Tim Hunt demeaned female scientists at a science journalism conference, he was compelled to resign as honorary professor at University College London.[740] The question whether these utterances constituted intramural or extramural speech was not even posed; the utterances were (said to be) so beyond the pale, so vile, as to render null and void all other considerations. The fact that they were driven out of their academic posts did not evoke hues and cries of academic freedom from the usual suspects.[741] The point is not whether or not they should have suffered penalties. Each had his academic defenders as well as detractors. Rather, the point is, as the school administrator pronounced, "there is always a limit." It's manifestly not obvious *where* to draw the line, but positing the absence of *any* line is "theoretical, not realistic." Those who uphold a professor's absolute right to untrammeled extramural speech cannot but slip into the untenable position of defending the indefensible. If Summers had said at the faculty Christmas party that the position of women in science should be "prone,"[742] or Hunt had posted on his Facebook page that he prefers his female students to be amply endowed,[743] can it be doubted that the line would have been crossed, and that they would, deservedly, be booted out of academic life? Even if by some small miracle they did manage to retain their posts, they would nonetheless almost certainly be informally quarantined. But if the primary purpose of tenure is job security, which serves as a guardrail against external encroachments on free inquiry, then the primary purpose of academic freedom itself is to facilitate the pursuit of Truth, which, as an intrinsically collective enterprise, must presuppose each and every would-be participant's unimpeded access to the marketplace of ideas. If the price of outrageous extramural utterances is ostracism, then, even if one manages to preserve one's teaching position, the principle of academic freedom has been defeated. The professor-pariah is no longer a full and equal

participant in the marketplace even if he still collects a paycheck. If a professor is rarely ejected from academia, or forced to resign, or locked out of the academic marketplace on account of his extramural utterances, it's not because anything goes, but because every professor knows that a line *does* exist, roughly where it has been drawn, and what not to say, if he doesn't want to land on the wrong side of it.

It is inconceivable that Russell was oblivious to the school administrator's strictures. How, then, should his statements be construed, that "in extra-professional hours a teacher should be free to express his opinions, whatever they may be," and "it is necessary that people should learn to endure having their sentiments outraged"? One can speculate in several directions. When Russell penned these words, a professor's calling carried much more gravitas than after the massive postwar expansion of higher education and concomitant dumbing down of faculty; it probably didn't even occur to him that someone occupying such an elevated station would descend to gutter levels of extramural utterance. Russell was also slated to teach in the most abstract, purely intellectual disciplines, where, as compared to the dispenser of wisdom function, the dispenser of knowledge function is much the greater. One rarely looks to a physicist or mathematician for insight into mundane concerns; indeed, one almost expects such a professor to be detached from the real world, otherworldly. It would therefore make sense to attach less weight to this side of his professional calling, and even to tenure a world-class scholar in the natural sciences who is an unrepentant sexist or racist; this isn't to say that no "moral" red lines would be drawn, but that they would probably be less stringent than for a humanities professor. The existence of such a double standard was conceded, if only implicitly, by Russell and his supporters. The strongest point in their brief was that Russell was not hired to teach the subject matter of his social commentary, and consequently that it would not be broached in

his classes. But this still leaves the question, *What if Russell* was *hired to teach a class on marriage and morals?* To judge by his publications, Russell surely possessed the requisite professional competence. However, it was apparently taken for granted by his staunchest supporters, and even by Russell himself, that if his social opinions "outraged" public sentiment, it *did* disqualify him from holding forth on them in a classroom. Otherwise, why would Russell and his supporters be so emphatic that his teaching writ was narrowly circumscribed to subjects that did not touch on his social opinions? In other words, it was tacitly conceded that the judge in Russell's case was in principle correct: if a person of his eminence and charisma condoned acts that were—or, at any rate, appeared to be—outrageous, then, in his disciplinary function (were he teaching marriage and morals) or his dispenser of wisdom function (were students to seek out his counsel), he could, indeed, probably would, lead astray impressionable young minds under his seductive sway. But if Russell staked out a right to unrestricted extramural utterances, "whatever they might be," and even if they "outraged" public sentiment, the rationale behind his position lay, I think, for the most part elsewhere. He was convinced that his social opinions would eventually be vindicated: that, even if the public of his time was "outraged" by them, in fact they weren't outrageous. A comparable logic underlay Mill's unstinting praise in *On Liberty* not just for individuality, but also for individuality *in excelsis*:

> Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time.

However, isn't the line between eccentricity and pathology a thin one? If it might be difficult to demarcate it, there is still, to invoke yet again that cautionary phrase—"always a limit." This is not just a theoretical

point, it's also a most practical one. If eccentricity ought to be encouraged notwithstanding public outrage, then, pathology just as surely ought to be discouraged; if a person is sick, he needs help, not incentive.[744] The opinions of Russell that "outraged" the prevailing opinion of his day—per premarital cohabitation, homosexuality—proved to be eccentricities, not pathologies. They have not only ceased to shock, but in fact have since passed into commonplace.[745] Whereas the school administrator deemed it inconceivable that a professor advocating homosexuality could secure a teaching post on a college campus, the reverse is probably closer to the truth today. Still, it can't be denied that certain behaviors are pathological and should be criminalized. Exactly which ones fall into this category, I confess not to know for certain, although incest and pedophilia would appear to be strong candidates. Can a professor advocating them nonetheless fulfill his role as a fount of wisdom? In other words, a professor's public exhortation to pursue certain modes of conduct must be reckoned a step too far. Owing to either uncanny human insight or serendipity, Russell's social opinions were merely ahead of the curve. But, if he had advocated not innocuous eccentricities, but, on the contrary, certifiable pathologies, he would have crossed a threshold, and would deservedly suffer a professional penalty. It would, incidentally, also be a most unpleasant experience having to share an office and banter with such a colleague. "So, any plans for the weekend?"

Political incivility (I): Angela Davis at U.C.L.A.

In 1969, U.C.L.A. recruited an African-American, Angela Davis, to teach courses in the Philosophy Department.[746] Although only 25 years old at the time of her appointment, Davis had already accumulated an impressive academic resumé. She had studied French

literature at the Sorbonne, and then moved on to study philosophy at the University of Frankfurt under Theodor W. Adorno. Shortly after her (temporary) appointment was announced,[747] it became a matter of public controversy that Davis was a member of the Communist Party. The Board of Regents of the University of California voted to suspend her teaching responsibilities, but the U.C.L.A. Academic Senate voted to oppose the decision. A lawsuit filed by members of the U.C.L.A. faculty in a California state court resulted in an annulment, on technical grounds, of the Board of Regents' action.[748] But Davis was then subjected to renewed scrutiny, on account of several allegedly inflammatory speeches she had delivered at political rallies. Whereas U.C.L.A. solidly backed Davis' right to finish out her appointment, the Regents majority voted to terminate it.

The sequence of events pointed to the conclusion that Davis' membership in the Communist Party was the precipitating factor in the Regents' attacks on her. However, once her extramural utterances at political rallies came to light as a result of the publicity surrounding her Party membership, they came to figure as an independent, but probably subordinate, factor in her case and the Regents' decision.[749] The case thus presented a hybrid: even as it played itself out as a test on the *form* of her rally speeches, the *content* of her Communist beliefs always hovered in the background.[750] It was formally held against Davis that she had publicly accused the Regents of "immoral usurpation," establishing a "tyranny over the University of California," and being "unscrupulous demagogues," and, to boot, had denounced police as "pigs."

The Davis case was scrutinized by several committees. The report of a U.C.L.A. *Ad Hoc Committee* found that, whereas the A.A.U.P. admonished faculty to "respect the opinion of others," Davis was "less than fair in her characterization of the views of fellow scholars whom she has denounced," and that, whereas the A.A.U.P. admonished

faculty to "show appropriate restraint" in their extramural utterances and not to make deliberately false statements, Davis "frequently sacrificed accuracy and fairness for the sake of rhetorical effect," and some of her public utterances were "distasteful and reprehensible." Still, it didn't find that her verbal indiscretions justified disciplinary action, although they should "be carefully considered in the context of a full-scale evaluation of Miss Davis' record of performance by the appropriate faculty [and] administrative authorities," if and when her contract came up for renewal.[751] A report by the University of California *Board of Regents* found that her public statements were "so extreme ... and so obviously deliberately false in several respects as to be inconsistent with qualification for appointment to the faculty of the University of California." An investigation launched by the A.A.U.P. concluded that "the mere characterization of a speech as 'extreme' conveys no criticism cognizable under A.A.U.P. standards"; that, although Davis herself acknowledged that one of her rally statements was not literally accurate,[752] her extracurricular speeches "in most instances were not shown to be violations of A.A.U.P. standards of academic responsibility"; and that, even if she did violate an A.A.U.P. admonition on academic responsibility, the Regents did not even attempt to show how this violation demonstrated her unfitness to teach, which was dispositive in a disciplinary hearing.

The Davis case posed few, if any, questions of principle. She was originally denied her teaching post on the grounds of Communist Party membership, but the courts subsequently reversed that decision. She was then denied her teaching post on the basis of her extramural utterances. But, in the main, these utterances barely registered on the radar screen. She disparaged the Board of Regents, which, in light of the witch-hunt it orchestrated against her, would appear to be understandable. She was accused of stretching a point in one instance and was apparently syntactically ambiguous in a second instance. Her

only "inappropriate" turn of phrase was referring to cops as "pigs," which was probably an attempt by a highly educated African-American woman teaching Kant by day to bridge the social chasm separating her from inner-city Blacks by night.[753] Compared to others with whom she shared the platform, and situated in the context of those heady times, Davis' utterances must be reckoned on the tame side. "In this day and age," a dissenting member of the Board of Regents observed, "when the decibel level of political debate … has reached the heights it has, it is unrealistic and disingenuous to demand as a condition of employment that the professor address political rallies in the muted cadences of scholarly exchanges."[754] It might also have been claimed on Davis' behalf that "you cannot limit free speech to polite criticism, because the greater a grievance the more likely men are to get excited about it, and the more urgent the need of hearing what they have to say" (noted First Amendment scholar Zechariah Chafee).[755] However, even if Davis' extramural utterances did violate an A.A.U.P. standard, the fact remained that, to not just admonish but also to discipline her, it had to be shown that these utterances evidenced her unsuitability to teach. The A.A.U.P.'s "controlling principle," it will be recalled, is that "a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member's unfitness to serve."[756] But, by all accounts, Davis acquitted herself with distinction as a teacher and clearly had a promising scholarly career ahead of her.[757]

Political Civility (II): Steven Salaita at University of Illinois, Urbana--Champaign

In 2014, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U.I.U.C.) stripped Steven Salaita of a tenured position in its Program of American Indian Studies before he had even begun to teach. The stated ground for its decision was his incendiary posts on Twitter during Israel's brutal assault on Gaza in July-August 2014.[758] (Salaita is

of Jordanian and Palestinian descent.) A campaign denouncing his "hate speech" had been orchestrated by supporters of Israel and included major alumni donors.[759] After it had initially defended his appointment,[760] the U.I.U.C. administration abruptly reversed itself. The Chancellor maintained that the decision to rescind Salaita's appointment was based solely on the tone of his tweets, not their political content.[761] The university's decision evoked an outburst of protest both internally (16 academic departments at U.I.U.C. voted no confidence[762]) and externally (a boycott of the university was endorsed by over 5,000 scholars). Among the tweets held against Salaita were:

> You may be too refined to say it, but I'm not: I wish all the fucking West Bank settlers would go missing.
>
> Let's cut to the chase: If you're defending #Israel right now you're an awful human being.
>
> Zionist uplift in America: every little Jewish boy and girl can grow up to be the leader of a murderous colonial regime.
>
> The @IDFSpokesperson is a lying motherfucker.
>
> Do you have to visit your physician for prolonged erections when you see pictures of dead children in #Gaza?[763]

The initial investigation of Salaita's case was conducted by the U.I.U.C. academic senate's *Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure* (C.A.F.T.).[764] It found no evidence that Salaita "has functioned improperly as a teacher," while "civility does not constitute a legitimate criterion for rejecting his appointment."[765] But it allowed that the administration had "raised a legitimate question of … his professional fitness," and recommended that his "candidacy be remanded … for reconsideration by a committee of qualified academic experts."[766] The U.I.U.C. administration rejected C.A.F.T.'s findings and recommendations and reaffirmed its decision to oust him. The A.A.U.P. also objected to Salaita's dismissal on the basis of his uncivil extramural speech: "'civility' is vague and ill-defined. It is not a

transparent or self-evident concept, and it does not provide an objective standard for judgment." It further found that "even if the tone of one's expression is highly charged, it does not constitute grounds for punishment," and that the administration did not discipline other U.I.U.C. faculty guilty of egregiously uncivil extramural speech.[767] It rejected C.A.F.T.'s recommendation that Salaita's professional fitness be reexamined by a faculty committee.

The Davis and Salaita cases invite comparison. The formal ground for dismissal in both instances was uncivil extramural speech. In Davis' case, her pro-Communist leanings precipitated the campaign against her, while her extramural utterances served to some degree as a pretext. In Salaita's case, his pro-Palestinian leanings were not a precipitating factor; if the tone of his tweets had been less inflammatory, it's almost certain that his appointment wouldn't have made waves. In defending Salaita, the A.A.U.P. posited that "inevitably, the standard of civility conflates the tone of an enunciation with its content." In other words, whereas objection is raised to the tone, it's really the content that was found objectionable. Often this is the case, but not "inevitably" so. Consider the tweet by Salaita that provoked the most outrage: "You may be too refined to say it, but I'm not: I wish all the fucking West Bank settlers would go missing." He posted this message right after three Israeli teenagers had been kidnapped in the West Bank and were widely presumed murdered.[768] If he had vented displeasure, even disgust, at the Jewish settlers, and enumerated their thousand and one infamies, but not hoped that all of them would "go missing," the tweet would probably have passed without notice; *pace* the A.A.U.P., the tone (and timing) did make a difference.[769] The A.A.U.P. further posited, "it is always the powerful who determine [civility's] meaning—a meaning that serves to delegitimize the words and actions of those to whom it is applied." It went on to cite wide-ranging historical examples, such as the

manipulation of civility by the aristocracy to elevate itself above the bourgeoisie; the bourgeoisie to elevate itself above the lower orders; Christians to elevate themselves above Jews and Muslims; Europeans to justify their colonial conquests; Southern whites to delegitimize the "uncivil" behavior of students engaged in peaceful sit-ins. However true this learned disquisition might be,[770] it's also wholly irrelevant to the case at hand. The "powerful" did not manipulate the notion of "civility" in order to elevate themselves above and subjugate an "oppressed" Palestinian. If Salaita made promiscuous use of the "F" word on Twitter, it was because he *wanted* to shock and offend. He was not the victim of a "discourse" designed to devalue him or delegitimize his actions. He had the option to be civil, and in fact prides himself on being civil: "I am civil to a fault."[771] He made a conscious, deliberate decision, however, to be coarse; if the F-word didn't shock and offend, he wouldn't have used it. In other words, he accepted the norm of civility, more often than not abided by it, but in this instance, he elected to be uncivil to make a political point. "I frequently choose incivility.… The choice is both moral and rhetorical."[772] He was not the victim of elite manipulation. On the contrary, he *chose* to breach the commonly accepted conventions of civility. It is fashionable among woke radicals to deplore an alleged tendency among scholars to deny "agency" to the oppressed. But when Salaita demonstrated agency and was forced, unfairly, to pay a price, the A.A.U.P. defended him as a helpless and woebegone victim of discursive manipulation by "the powerful." The pretense that he was the casualty of pervasive anti-Palestinian prejudice in academia also does not wash. In a memoir of his ordeal, Salaita repeatedly invoked this chimera: "outing oneself as pro-Palestine is a troublesome prospect in academe"; "the [Jewish] settlers' disquiet continues to define normative discourse in academe"; "many deans, provosts, and presidents are indeed averse to all things Palestine"; "Palestinians and their allies face barrages of

racist invective and verbal abuse to accompany the more civilized practices of microaggression and character assassination"; "anybody who criticizes practices of colonization in Palestine or North America will experience tremendous vitriol, plenty of it from liberal sources"; "engagement with Palestine has repeatedly proved deleterious to one's professional development"; "when it comes to systematic critique of Israel, somebody is going to be punished"; "I was fired … because I criticized Israel too loudly."[773] But Salaita's own example suggests the reverse. He received his PhD in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma and the last academic post he held prior to U.I.U.C was at Virginia Tech teaching English. Although a popular instructor ("incredibly popular," according to him[774]), Salaita's publication record left no discernible mark, and a large portion of it is barely intelligible.[775] Nonetheless, he was catapulted to a tenured position at a research university on a unanimous vote by the department (the candidate pool comprised more than 80 applicants), and signed a contract that most academics can only dream of.[776] If this be oppression, then many a candidate on the academic job market would no doubt beg, "Bring it on, please!" Once Salaita's tweets supplied a pretext, however, his pro-Palestinian leanings did kick in as the decisive factor. The Israel lobby leapt at the silver platter on which his tweets were laid and ran with it.[777] Even here, however, a stipulation is in order. Salaita's termination evoked a firestorm of protest and mobilization in academia. It is hard to imagine such a display of professional solidarity if, after three gay teenagers were kidnapped and presumed dead, an evangelical professor was fired for tweeting, "You may be too refined to say it, but I'm not: I wish all the fucking homosexuals would go missing." Even as one might quibble with the analogy, the broad fact remains that Salaita effectively sanctioned the kidnapping and killing of a 600,000-strong population of Jewish settler men, women and children. It was within his right as a

citizen to tweet this, while the brutality of the ever-aggrandizing West Bank settlers certainly made it understandable. If it didn't demonstrate his unfitness to teach, then it shouldn't have cost him his job. In fact, considering U.I.U.C.'s acquiescence in the case of its white supremacist and homophobic faculty, Salaita's dismissal was a disgustingly hypocritical outrage.[778] But in light of the national outpouring of support he received from professors and professional organizations despite his incendiary anti-Israel utterances, it's hard to sustain the pretense that academia is an anti-Palestinian hotbed. The bottom line is, Salaita was not initially targeted because he was pro-Palestinian; if his tweets had been civil, his appointment would not have been reversed. But it's also true that if he weren't pro-Palestinian, the Israel lobby wouldn't have exploited his uncivil tweets and strong-armed the administration, and he would be teaching today at U.I.U.C.

The U.I.U.C. administration appropriated the lexicon of cancel culture to defend its dismissal of Salaita. It variously declaimed that the university would not tolerate "harassing, intimidating … hate speech," "personal and disrespectful words or actions that demean and abuse either viewpoints themselves or those who express them"; the university has to be "a place where students feel safe," "a community that values civility as much as scholarship"; "disrespectful and demeaning speech that promotes malice is not an acceptable form of civil argument if we wish to ensure that students, faculty, and staff are comfortable in a place of scholarship and education," and so on. It is hard not to notice the irony. The leftist academics who rallied behind Salaita have by and large championed multicultural tolerance, political correctness, speech codes, and safe spaces to shield exposed campus groups. Although he heaps ridicule on the notion of civility, Salaita himself condemns U.I.U.C. for its "microaggression" against, insensitivity to, and disrespect for campus minorities.[779] U.I.U.C. turned these "enlightened" speech constraints against their

progenitors; it marshalled cancel culture to cancel one of the cancellers. Whereas Salaita's defenders might fall back on the extramural-intramural distinction, it plainly lacks coherence in this context. In general, if a professor's tweets publicly abuse, disparage or demean a vulnerable minority, won't students belonging to this minority feel abused, disparaged or demeaned in his classroom? The professor's tweets, as it were, follow him or adhere to him wherever he goes, including in the classroom. If potential hurt is the regulating principle, then every venue of a professor's speech—intramural or extramural, public or private—falls within its ambit. Setting itself apart from other crusading academic bodies, the A.A.U.P. did go on record in its 1992 policy statement, "On Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes," opposing statutory regulation of campus speech. Still it, too, was not free of contradiction. In its defense of Salaita, the A.A.U.P. opposed the standard of "civility" as it intrinsically lacked precision and historically served as an instrument of oppression. But its policy statement back in 1992 exhorted university officials to "challenge boldly and condemn immediately serious breaches of civility," and exhorted faculty to "make clear to their students that civility and tolerance are hallmarks of educated men and women." Thus, even as A.A.U.P. had opposed enforcing "civility" by administrative fiat or statutory sanction, it nonetheless urged the university community to positively advocate for it. But, in the Salaita case, the A.A.U.P. proclaimed, on the contrary, that "civility" was a nebulous and oppressive standard. In other words, the A.A.U.P. in 1992 invoked the standard of civility to protect exposed minorities without recourse to speech codes, while in the Salaita case the A.A.U.P. repudiated the standard of civility as upholding it would have undercut their defense of an exposed member of a minority group.

* * *

Although extramural incivility in and of itself no longer counts as a legitimate ground for denying tenure, it still figures as a professional standard in the form of an admonition. An academic institution cannot deprive you of a teaching post because of uncivil extramural speech, but you still have a professional responsibility to acquit yourself in a civil manner among the broad public.[780] The requirement of civility also plays a critical, if mostly tacit, role in the intramural life of academics. To take the most obvious example, respected academic imprints and journals will almost never publish submissions that lack civility—unless, of course, the incivility is directed at a person in official disrepute—while, if you can't publish in these venues, the prospects of ascending the academic ladder are dim. It requires a degree of abstraction to parse the category of civility, as it incorporates intertwined and overlapping aspects that need to be disentangled and treated discretely. I will consider here delineations of civility that have figured in various A.A.U.P. statements and cases, but that I have not already parsed or have only briefly touched upon.[781]

A professor should defend the right of free inquiry by his colleagues and respect the fruit of his colleagues' intellectual labors. The A.A.U.P. "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" (1940) lays down that "college and university teachers … should show respect for the opinions of others." The first thing to note is the oddity of the correlate of this "respect"—"the *opinions* of others." If a pro-life advocate is genuinely convinced that abortion is murder, does he have a professional obligation to respect the opinion of a pro-choice colleague who advocates baby-killing? Is a professional colleague of John Yoo (Emanuel S. Heller Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley) bound to respect Yoo's opinion that it's okay to torture political detainees? The questions would appear to answer themselves. But what if the admonition were modified to read, "college and university teachers should show due respect for the pursuit of

truth by others"? That is, if you might not agree with, or even detest, his opinions, so long as he's acting in good faith, don't you have an obligation to respect his quest for truth, wherever it has taken him and whatever its fruits? "Professors," the A.A.U.P. thus declared in its "Statement on Professional Ethics,"[782] "respect and defend the free inquiry of associates, even when it leads to findings and conclusions that differ from their own." Of course, it's possible to argue that anyone who reaches a reprehensible conclusion must be acting in bad faith. But that precludes the possibility of an honest reactionary. Put otherwise, it presupposes deciding the point at issue in your favor before the inquiry has even begun. Even as it might pain to credit the motive in an intellectual enterprise, the end product of which you regard as an abomination, a duty perhaps does inhere to respect this colleague's conscientious search for truth, if that's what it was (or if it can't be proven otherwise). For in respecting this colleague, you do nothing more than pay tribute to your professional calling, the essence of which is the pursuit of truth, not a "politically correct" conclusion.

This genre of civility came to the fore in the Angela Davis case. Davis had publicly expressed contempt for the research of Harvard professor Arthur Jensen, which purported to demonstrate the congenital mental inferiority of African-Americans, and she appeared to question his right to academic freedom.[783] Curiously, the A.A.U.P., in its defense of Davis, cast doubt on its own professed standard of collegial respect:

> It is a matter for consideration … whether the requirement of showing "due respect" for the opinions of others in the exchange and criticism of ideas is not a rather shaky standard to repair to; indeed, it seems to be more honored in the breach than in the observance. Scholarly debates are not always conducted in the genteel tradition; they are often characterized by free-swinging, even savage, personal attacks on the judgment, credibility or integrity of others. Some of the world's greatest theologians, philosophers, artists, and scientists have been formidable polemicists, heaping scorn, ridicule, and contempt on their intellectual adversaries. Moreover, there is the question whether one should be obligated to pay "due respect" to the proponent of a theory or

> assertion which one sincerely believes to be vicious and evil or even simply arrant nonsense. It is understandable that Miss Davis should be intellectually and emotionally allergic to theories she interprets as suggesting that Negroes are racially inferior. Indeed, she asserts her right to condemn such theories and to express her hostility and contempt for those who advocate them.[784]

It would be fatuous to pretend that Davis' case doesn't pose thorny questions. Davis studied at the Sorbonne and under Adorno in Germany; she was teaching Kant in U.C.L.A.'s philosophy department. However you parse the notion, could it really be expected of Davis that she, of all people, would *respect* someone propagating the idea that the mental aptitude of Black people approximated that of baboons? Still, the question remains, wasn't she obliged to respect his intellectual integrity as a fellow scholar? Davis would no doubt contend that, if Jensen had reached such a debased conclusion, it's because he was a racist from the get-go. Still, she couldn't prove it unless she demonstrated his conscious manipulation of data—a proof she never pretended to adduce. Does it then ensue that she must respect, if not his arrival point, nevertheless, his negotiation of the journey? But (she might say) even Mill denoted such an advocate, who zealously applies his wit in an obnoxious undertaking, as the *devil's* surrogate; however ingenious his defense of white supremacy might be, Jensen was still doing the devil's work, and in the normal course of affairs Satan is not paid deference. The appalling conclusion of a particular line of inquiry (she might further contend) cannot but retroactively taint, however meticulous its scholarship, the entire intellectual enterprise. It's rarely the case—at any rate, on a politically-charged topic—that a scholar stumbles upon a conclusion totally at odds with his expectations. Indeed, intellectual inquiry perforce starts with a working hypothesis, or thesis. If Jensen reached the conclusion that African-Americans possessed lower mental aptitude than whites, and if he's honest with himself, that's almost certainly because it was his assumption going in.[785] It might then legitimately be queried, why

would he want to invest his finite mental reserves in vindicating this thesis, except to inflict more hurt on, and arouse more hate of, an already despised and persecuted minority? If he retorted, it's simply a disinterested search for truth or, better yet, if he contrived a positive purpose—say, to lift from white people the unfair burden of guilt for the plight of Black America—the hurt and hate would still be inevitable collateral damage; and, even in the laws of war, one has to weigh whether the military advantage gained from targeting a legitimate military object is proportional to the inevitable civilian casualties. On this calculation, it's hard to see what robust social gains compensate for the hurt and harm of Jensen's intellectual project; it's not as if white people wake up each morning weighed down with remorse.[786] The fact is, he almost certainly entered his research a racist, while its results will have more deeply entrenched societal racism by wrapping it in the mantle of scholarship.[787] Even if his methods of inquiry were above reproach and his conclusions appeared valid, it's hard to preserve even a sliver of respect for someone who set out to prove a portion of humanity was of a lower order than the rest, and who ultimately increased the quantum of hurt and hate in the world, while the social contribution of such research was exiguous at best. His ugly departure point and ugly terminus cast from both ends such a dark shadow over his "truthful" mode of inquiry as to render it invisible. If there was something left to respect, it could barely be seen by the naked eye.[788] If the conclusion is true, it must, of course, be acknowledged. But, again, is its discoverer deserving of respect? Let's say a geneticist in Nazi Germany posited and then apparently proved that—per Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—Jews have a genetic predisposition for shysterism and lechery. For all anyone knows, it might be true: weren't most of the convicted Wall Street insider-traders in the 1980s and most of the high-profile sexual predators exposed by the #MeToo movement Jewish? But given the

antisemitic animus that almost certainly prompted this research agenda; given the surplus hurt and hate this research would have inflicted on an already persecuted people; given the slight contribution such a finding would make to the common good—given all this, it's hard to fathom why his Jewish colleagues (or anyone else) would be obliged to *respect* him. Defer to the message? Yes. Respect the messenger? No!

A professor is under professional obligation to be truthful when weighing in on matters of public concern. The A.A.U.P. "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" admonishes that "as scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate." Whereas the admonition to respect the opinion of others is open to debate, the requirement to be truthful is not. Its violation ought to be regarded as a gross infraction of professional responsibility. However many disclaimers a professor might enter ("I do not represent X institution," "I am only speaking for myself in a private capacity,"…) the aura surrounding his professional calling—which, it cannot be restated too many times, is the pursuit of Truth—inevitably and unavoidably carries over into his extramural utterances. Indeed, he benefits from a double presumption in the public arena: that he knows more than John Q. Public and that he is more fastidious in his presentation of facts. The greater the prestige of the institution to which he is attached, the greater the benefit redounding to him from this double presumption, but also the greater the professional transgression if he disinforms. By dint of the compounded credibility conferred on him by his calling and his institution, his lies can illegitimately tilt the result of public debate on a life-and-death issue; while, if caught lying, he not only soils himself but as well the entire profession, diminishing its stature in the eyes of the public. First Amendment authority Thomas Emerson pointed up

this obligation of a professor and of the institution to which he's affiliated:

> The university ... performs a ... function which is relevant to the rights and responsibilities of the faculty member as citizen. The essential principle of the democratic process is that every citizen has full access to all facts, opinions, and argument in an open market place of ideas. In the purest operation of this forum each individual must sift out the material for himself, judge the various opinions and arguments, and weigh the motives and competence of the speaker. The university system, to some degree, operates to shortcut this trial and error process by holding out the members of the faculty as competent to speak in their fields of expertise. In a sense the university certifies to the community that the faculty member is entitled to special attention in the marketplace of ideas.... The assistance which the university can thus render in facilitating the operation of the democratic process is substantial. *But performance of the function implies some responsibility on the faculty member to maintain the standards of competence when speaking as a citizen in his own field, and some obligation on the university in granting or revoking the certificate to protect those who rely upon it.* (emphasis added)[789]

Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz surely enjoyed the right to speak out on matters of public concern. But did he have the "right" to lie[790] and exploit his Harvard Law School pedigree when weighing in? I should think not. He ought to have been sanctioned by Harvard. In light of the magnitude, frequency, persistence and brazenness of his falsehoods, I personally would not have ruled out sacking him on grounds of intellectual depravity, which, in the academy, would (or should) constitute a branch of moral depravity. (Tenure does not protect a professor from discharge on grounds of moral turpitude.) Because it failed to act, Harvard was at minimum culpable of moral delinquency.

A professor should use civil language. The A.A.U.P. "Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" admonished "scholars and educational officers" to "exercise appropriate restraint" in their public utterances. The phrase "appropriate restraint" referred "solely to choice of language and to other aspects of the manner in which a statement is made," and not to "the substance of a teacher's remark."

The breach of such restraint was denoted "serious intemperateness of expression."[791] A classic exposition of this standard can be found in John Dewey's 1902 essay "Academic Freedom."

> The manner of conveying the truth may cause an irritation quite foreign to its own substance.... One might, for example, be scientifically convinced of the transitional character of the existing capitalistic control of industrial affairs....; one might be convinced that many and grave evils and injustices are incident to it, and yet never raise the question of academic freedom, although developing his views with definiteness and explicitness. He might go at the problem in such an objective, historic, and constructive manner as not to excite the prejudices or inflame the passions even of those who thoroughly disagreed with him. On the other hand, views at the bottom exactly the same can be stated in such a way as to rasp the feelings of everyone exercising the capitalistic function. What will stand or fall upon its own scientific merits, if presented as a case of objective social evolution, is mixed up with all sorts of extraneous and passion-inflaming factors when set forth as the outcome of the conscious and aggressive selfishness of a class.

Dewey goes on to point up the "necessity of the use of common sense in the expression of views on controverted points, especially points entering into the arena of current religious and political discussion. We may insist that a man needs tact as well as scholarship; or, let us say, sympathy with human interests—since 'tact' suggests perhaps too much a kind of juggling diplomacy with the questions at issue."[792] By "sympathy with human interests," he apparently wants to convey a recognition of and sensitivity to the fact that the disputed point cuts to the core of human feeling and emotion.

Dewey's reflections pose multiple questions, among them: Would a professor's civil mode of expression immunize his otherwise incendiary ideas from attack? Even if a civil mode of expression were an option, should a professor feel obliged ("We may insist that…") to adopt it? How would such a standard of civility be practically adjudicated, and isn't it inherently prone to corruption? Before addressing these points, a preliminary caveat is in order: a distinction must be drawn between an ad hominem, on the one hand, and a

characterization that personally offends but all the same is technically accurate, on the other. Respected journalist Allan Nairn alleged on national television that Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America during the Ronald Reagan administration, qualified as a war criminal under the Nuremberg principles. Noam Chomsky has alleged that, if judged on the basis of the Nuremberg principles, every U.S. president since World War II would have been hanged. After the former Secretary of State returned to teach at Stanford University, Middle East scholar Juan Cole alleged that Condoleezza Rice was a war criminal.[793] In and of themselves, such accusations no more display "serious intemperateness of expression" or lack of "appropriate restraint" than the allegations that Slobodan Milošević and Saddam Hussein were war criminals. They designate definite crimes under international law, the veracity of which are subject to proof or disproof. If, on closer inspection, the allegations proved to be manifestly false or grossly hyperbolic, they would probably constitute uncivil language (akin to using a catchall epithet such as "fascist"), but that's an a posteriori determination. Nairn et al. could not be fairly accused of incivility merely for leveling the charges.

In the quoted passage, Dewey contends that it is possible to submit for public consideration even the most contentious notions without exciting the passions, and that, if such an "objective" mode of expression were adopted, these notions would (as ought to be the case) stand or fall strictly on their "scientific merit." The argument is compelling, but not entirely persuasive. Several of the academic freedom milestones suggest that Dewey was unduly optimistic. Russell presented his ideas on marriage and morals in sober, scholarly prose, but it didn't save him from a public lynching. Koch's letter to the school paper did not pretend to be a learned disquisition and undoubtedly lacked in grace, but it's hard to conceive any iteration of the idea that the Church's teachings on sexuality were retrograde, and

college students should be free to engage in premarital sex, that, back then, wouldn't have caused all hell to break loose.[794] Dewey additionally contended that, whereas lack of "appropriate restraint" has often been rationalized as a fearless fidelity to Truth, it could just as well signal personal indulgence and imbalance:

> It is possible to confuse loyalty to truth with self-conceit in the assertion of personal opinion. It is possible to identify courage with bumptiousness. Lack of reverence for the things that mean much to humanity, joined with a craving for public notoriety, may induce a man to pose as a martyr for truth when in reality he is a victim of his own lack of mental and moral poise.[795]

The point is taken so long as it's not overly generalized: the political sphere is, of course, rife with posturers and crackpots, but history's annals also record many a seemingly egotistical and reckless defender of Truth who provoked outrage in his times, but subsequently became the object of deserved reverence.

Is Dewey right that, if the option is available, a scholar should feel obliged to choose an "objective" mode of expression? But respected legal scholar Harry Kalven, Jr. defined law as "disciplined passion"—with equal emphasis on both words, and a "great judge" as one possessing both "a sense of justice and a capacity for indignation."[796] "Political passion," Robert C. Post, a leading contemporary authority on academic freedom, has observed, "is in fact the engine that drives some of the best scholarship and teaching."[797] It might also be that a scholar aspires to locate the fruits of his mental labors on the borderline between the civility of the seminar room and the tempestuousness of the town square; to reconcile the potential (but not inevitable) tension between the rigorous researcher who meets the most exigent standards of academic protocol, and the pugilistic polemicist who leaps headlong into the public fray; to be both scholar and muckraker, ivory tower and public intellectual. Consider Karl Marx. Renowned conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter rated

him an "economist of top rank."[798] Still, Marx couldn't resist interlarding scholarly detachment and highbrow literary allusion in his magnum opus, *Das Kapital*, with partisan polemic and lowbrow lampoon. To quote Schumpeter's colorful phrase, "the cold metal of economic theory is in Marx's pages immersed in such a wealth of steaming phrases as to acquire a temperature not naturally its own."[799] In this "triumph of German science" (Marx's description of *Das Kapital*[800]), Bastiat is reckoned a "dwarf economist," Young "a rambling, uncritical writer whose reputation is inversely related to his merits," and MacCulloch "a past master … of pretentious cretinism"; Say trucks in "absurdity and triviality," Roscher "seldom loses the opportunity of rushing into print with ingenious apologetic fantasies," while Ganilh's tome is "cretinous," "miserable," and "twaddle." Even —or especially and, in my opinion, inexcusably—John Stuart Mill wasn't spared Marx's verbal rapier: "On a level plain, simple mounds look like hills; and the insipid flatness of our present bourgeoisie is to be measured by the altitude of its 'great intellects.'" Of the subject-matter of his scientific treatise, Marx posits that "capital is dead labor which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks," and that it came into the world "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt."[801] Dewey is probably correct that if Marx had presented his "critique of political economy" (the subtitle of *Das Kapital*) in an "objective, historic, and constructive manner," his analysis of the capitalist system would have lost none of its *intellectual* cogency. But Marx elected an "intemperate" mode of expression palpably lacking in "restraint." For, as Frederick Engels recalled at his comrade's funeral, Marx wrote not just for "historical science" but also for the "militant proletariat"; he was "the man of science" but "before all else a revolutionary."[802] Indeed, Marx applauded his French publisher's decision to serialize *Das Kapital*, as "in this form, the book will be

more accessible to the working class, a consideration which to me outweighs everything else."[803] He positively aspired to inflame the passions of the proletariat into action while, to boot, giving vent to his own detestation of the bourgeoisie and the scribes who labored on its behalf. In a word, he set out to infuse *Das Kapital* with the *whole* of his being, not just his intellect but also his passion and pathos. Dewey would perhaps have dismissed this modus operandi as a self-indulgent tantrum at the expense of scholarly discipline, and maybe he would be on the money; maybe Karl needed to grow up, or maybe he suffered from ADHD. The substantive question, however, is this. It's unthinkable that a university press would publish *Das Kapital* in the form Marx presented it and, consequently, he wouldn't have been eligible for a position at a top university. But if the likes of Marx wouldn't qualify for a tenured appointment at a first-rank university, isn't that a reductio ad absurdum? Doesn't it conclusively illustrate the inanity of a standard commanding restrained and temperate language?

Surely it can be that the urgency of circumstance or gravity of subject matter is such as to warrant a breach of academic etiquette; that, if a professor, in his public interventions or scholarly publications, develops "his views with definiteness and explicitness," but minus the moral indignation, it's not yet a comprehensive expression of his opinions; that to dryly "go at the problem in … an objective, historic and constructive manner," and to designedly not "rasp the feelings" of the perpetrators in the face of an ongoing act of criminality, would be not just cowardly negligence but to boot a moral obscenity. Even so modulated, temperate a social critic as John Stuart Mill admiringly observed that his father "threw his feelings into his opinions; which truly it is difficult to understand how anyone, who possesses much of both, can fail to do;" that "those who, having opinions, which they hold to be immensely important, and the contraries to be prodigiously hurtful, have any deep regard for the

general good, will necessarily dislike ... those who think wrong what they think right, and right what they think wrong;" that such robust opinions made combustible by passionate feeling do not in and of themselves constitute intolerance so long as those of contrary opinions don't suffer being muzzled; and that such "forbearance, which flows from a conscientious sense of the importance to mankind of the equal freedom of all opinions, is the only tolerance which is commendable, or to the highest moral order of mind, possible."[804] To wit, if one is deeply touched by the sufferings of humankind, then it is impossible in intellectual combat not to rasp the feelings of those purveying evil, nor should one even aspire, as it is not human, to such restraint; while verbally pugnacious combat, so long as one's interlocutors get their say, cannot legitimately be construed as crossing the threshold of intolerance.

Further, to hermetically compartmentalize "scientific" from "passion-inflaming" exposition is to overlook those noble occasions when it's the professor's fearless, unalloyed, "scientific" quest for Truth that excites the passions—of youth in particular, harnessing their energies and energizing their latencies, as this mighty army of the righteous—set in motion by the expositor of science setting forth the scrupulous Truth—then steps forth onto history's stage to remake the world into a better place, equipped now with a surplus of conviction and guided by a superior wisdom. Professor Chomsky dubbed Jeane Kirkpatrick "chief sadist in residence of the Reagan Administration."[805] Kirkpatrick was at the time U.S. ambassador to the U.N., where she atrociously whitewashed U.S. atrocities in Central America. If Chomsky has inspired each new generation of youth, notwithstanding his tedious marshaling and uninflected (if sarcasm-laced) delivery of facts, it's because his person has seamlessly and irrevocably woven together his finely-honed intellectual and moral faculties. It is the yearning of young people for a revered figure

—one whose intellectual attainments are of such an exalted order that he cannot be brushed aside—to speak the impolite and impolitic truth, to give expression to the purity of the moral indignation that animates them and that the urgency of the occasion demands.[806] There are moments that might positively require breaking free of the constraints imposed by polite public discourse in order to sound the tocsin that, as we indifferently carry on in a privileged sanctuary of peace and prosperity, innocent people are being butchered by our own state. The uncivil reality, not uncivil words, should be cause for reproach and excoriation, while uncivil words might be called for to bring home the uncivil reality. An ad hominem should not be a substitute for reasoned thought—no one would accuse Chomsky of failing to logically argue his case or footnote it—but neither should a *cri de coeur*, however astringent, be ruled beyond the ambit of legitimate public discourse or, for that matter, a scholarly publication. In *Cohen v. California* (1971), the defendant had been convicted during the Vietnam War of wearing a jacket displaying the slogan "Fuck the Draft" in a Los Angeles courthouse. Supreme Court Justice Harlan, beyond making the obvious point that it's not always easy to distinguish polite from offensive speech ("one man's vulgarity is another's lyric"), noted that "words are often chosen as much for their emotive as their cognitive force," and that proscribing such words would silence a crucial component of the message being conveyed:

> We cannot sanction the view that the Constitution, while solicitous of the cognitive content of individual speech, has little or no regard for the emotive function which, practically speaking, may often be the more important element of the overall message sought to be communicated.[807]

If a professor shouldn't resort to intemperate and unrestrained prose, shouldn't he then also guard against their first cousins, irony and sarcasm? But there's a long, honorable tradition of deploying these literary weapons to ridicule pretense, fatuity, and charlatanry, to

expose the emperor's nakedness. It is cause for wonder why the blunt instrument of an epithet is regarded as impermissibly gauche whereas the elegant putdown is an admired staple of academic life. True, it might display wit and possess charm but, more often than not, such precious stylishness amounts to self-indulgent verbal pedantry and is testament to the lack of a moral center. It is the cleverness of the salon, which abhors things getting too serious, because that ruins the fun; and, in the end, it's all about fun, isn't it? (See Christopher Hitchens.)[808] If, however, you swear by the sanctity of life and loathe those who would carelessly extinguish it, "sadist in residence" might not be the most artful turn of phrase but it still hits the mark.

Even if the legitimacy of the admonition commanding civil speech were admitted, the practical difficulty of how civil speech would be surveilled remains. Dewey himself acknowledges that "all sorts of difficulties arise when we attempt to lay down any rules for, pass any judgment upon" the parameters of civil speech. "Such rules are likely to be innocuous truisms."[809] But the challenge goes further; the enforcement of such truisms is inevitably biased. The most civil of writers, Mill, warned of the danger that lurked in imposing a standard such as "free expression of all opinions should be permitted on condition that the manner be temperate, and do not pass the bounds of fair discussion." (*On Liberty*)[810] Among Mill's reservations were these. *First*, "experience testifies" that if an argument gives offense, it's often not because it is intemperate, but because it is a trenchant line of attack that is "telling and powerful" and "difficult to answer." *Second*, the "gravest" incivilities in debate—"to argue sophistically, to suppress facts or arguments, to misstate the elements of the case, or misrepresent the opposite opinion"—are often practiced in "perfect good faith." The interlocutor truly believes what he's saying. How, then, can he be held morally, let alone legally, culpable for a conviction honestly come by? *Third*, the "commonly" understood

forms of intemperate language, "namely invective, sarcasm…, and the like," carry a price if resorted to by a dissenter but, if practiced by an exponent of prevailing opinion, such coarse language is not only overlooked but even "likely to obtain for him who uses [it] the praise of honest zeal and righteous indignation." Indeed, the dissenter invariably pays the stiffer penalty when ad hominems supercharge a controversy: exposed and ostracized as he already is by his heterodox opinion, he has fewer resources to draw on if yet further maligned as "bad and immoral." In the interest of intellectual fair play, a level playing field, Mill contended that, if a restriction on intemperate language were to be legislated, it should be on exponents of conventional opinion:

> In general, opinions contrary to those commonly received can only obtain a hearing by studied moderation of language and the most cautious avoidance of unnecessary offence, from which they hardly ever deviate even in a slight degree without losing ground, while unmeasured vituperation employed on the side of the prevailing opinion really does deter people from professing contrary opinions and from listening to those who profess them. For the interest, therefore, of truth and justice it is far more important to restrain this employment of vituperative language than the other; and, for example, if it were necessary to choose, there would be much more need to discourage offensive attacks on infidelity than on religion.[811]

"It is, however, obvious," Mill concluded, "that law and authority have no business with restraining either."

The precepts of academic inquiry that Dewey recommends clearly have an appeal. An argument is approached "objectively," it neither "rasps" feelings nor "excites" prejudices and, thus freed of "extraneous" influences and reduced to its bare essence, its merit is scrutinized, as if a laboratory specimen under a microscope, on a strictly "scientific" basis. It would be disingenuous to deny the possibility of such a modus operandi. Even the most fraught subject-matter can be dispassionately anatomized. One thinks of Raul Hilberg's analysis of "the destruction of the European Jews," which

reads like a lab report; one searches its thousand-plus pages nearly in vain for an adjective or adverb. It is hard not to admire Hilberg's mental discipline, as he had a personal investment in the subject matter (his family just barely escaped Austria after the *Anschluss*). But it must also be said that, when he undertook his study, Nazism had already passed into history, and any denunciation of it at that point, after the Nuremberg Trials, would have been gratuitous at best, and grandstanding at worst. Still, the question remains: can't books pass scholarly muster even if they rasp feelings and inflame passions, even if the subject matter, instead of being isolated from the Sturm und Drang of lived experience, is poised squarely in the midst of them? Were that not the case, it wouldn't be possible to extract a "scientific" core from *Das Kapital* or, for that matter, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*, which also indulges many an intemperate rhetorical flight.[812] It might, finally, be contended that a book's intemperate tone necessarily undercuts its scientific pretensions. But an intemperate cast of mind is oftentimes next of kin to a robust point of view; and if a scholarly temperament doesn't preclude the latter, it doesn't preclude the former either. "A man without a bias cannot write interesting history," the Nobel laureate in literature, Bertrand Russell, observed, "if, indeed, such a man exists. I regard it as mere humbug to pretend to lack of bias…. Which bias is nearer to the truth must be left to posterity."[813]

* * *

Consider now my own case. If I was denied tenure and ultimately banished from academia, it allegedly traced back to my lack of professional civility.[814] True, I accused Professor Dershowitz of plagiarism and fabrication, and I accused Jewish organizations and lawyers of extorting monies in the name of "needy Holocaust victims." But plagiarism, fabrication, extortion—these are technical terms,

subject to proof or disproof, not ad hominem attacks. It is not as if I didn't adduce copious evidence to support my allegations; indeed, haven't these allegations since been resoundingly vindicated? True, I had mocked Elie Wiesel as he declared, for example, that

> Words are a kind of horizontal approach, while silence offers you a vertical approach.

He additionally proclaimed that the "secret" of the Holocaust's "truth lies in silence." Putting two and two together, I wondered aloud, "Does Wiesel parachute into his Holocaust lectures?" And I mocked Professor Steven Katz as he set out to prove that The Holocaust was "phenomenologically unique" in a

> non-Husserlian, non-Shutzean, non-Schelerian, non-Heideggerian, non-Merleau-Pontyan sense.

That, I should think, begged for my tag line, "Translation: The Katz enterprise is phenomenal non-sense."[815] Aren't mockery, irony, and satire legitimate literary weapons to expose pomposity, fatuity, and charlatanry? The charge of incivility, Mill noted, is often directed at the weak by the strong, even as the strong are just as prone to incivility—the difference being, the weak get ostracized for their crassness, the strong lauded for their righteous indignation. Professor Omer Bartov of Brown University denounced *The Holocaust Industry* in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review* by letting loose a barrage of invective: "bizarre," "outrageous," "paranoid," "shrill," "strident," "indecent," "juvenile," "self-righteous," "arrogant," "stupid," "smug," "fanatic."[816] No doubt the John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History imagined himself to be, oh, so brave as he cut down to size an itinerant adjunct professor. The book's title outraged. But didn't former Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban famously quip, "There's no business like Shoah business"? Since my book's publication in 2000, ridicule of the Holocaust industry—the real thing, not my book—has entered popular culture. The spouse of the former

director of the U.S. Holocaust Museum won praise for her "satire" of the Holocaust industry.[817] A prominent Israeli politician published a book deploring exploitation of the Nazi holocaust by the "Shoah industry."[818] Indeed, in a sequel one cannot but savor—if only for its sheer chutzpah—Bartov himself got into the act. Abruptly reversing himself, Bartov now railed against the "growing list of Holocaust profiteers," and put forth as a prime example … "Norman Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry*"![819] If I committed a sin, then it was being not uncivil but untimely—ahead of, not behind the curve. The Communist veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, who defended the Republic in the Spanish Civil War, were stigmatized during the McCarthy era as "premature anti-fascists." That is to say, they had fought fascism before respectable opinion in the West turned against it. If he's got the "wrong" politics, the premature critic won't reap a reward for getting there first; discerning a truth before the "experts" did. Not just because he is an embarrassing, irritating reminder to authorized authority, but also because he undercuts such authority in the present. The public might infer—God forbid!—that if his "crackpot" opinion was right back then and the pundit class wrong, then maybe his "crackpot" opinion *now* is right and the pundit class wrong. Instead of winning plaudits for his prescience, the critic of Israel who traces back to that era when the Holy State could do no wrong—"premature anti-Zionist"?—is hence still sequestered in the cancel column. In any event, wasn't the accusation of incivility at bottom a politically contrived excuse to change the subject and a pretext to deflect attention from my book's content? Wasn't it a calculated ploy to shower abuse on the messenger's incivility so as to avoid or discredit his message—that Israel exploited The Holocaust to enable its criminality; that American Jews had converted The Holocaust into a shakedown racket?

It is child's play to multiply examples of a civility double-standard at the expense of the weaker party. During my tenure battle, Professor Dershowitz posted on Harvard Law School's official website the allegation that my late Mother was (or that I suspected she was) "a kapo" who had been "cooperating with the Nazis during the Holocaust." My Mother was a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, Majdanek concentration camp and two slave-labor camps; she lost every member of her family; after the war she served as a key witness at a Nazi deportation hearing in the U.S. and at the trial of Majdanek concentration camp guards in Dusseldorf, Germany. (I accompanied her to the trial.) Even granting academic freedom the widest berth, Dershowitz' sick libel *would*, I think, be deserving of official censure, even sanction. He not only enjoyed impunity, however, but then-Harvard Law School Dean Elena Kagan (she's currently a U.S. Supreme Court justice) also refused to take down his posting from the H.L.S. website.[820] Still, wasn't it incumbent upon me to "respect" a professor's opinions or scientific research even as I found statements of his appalling? Israeli historian Benny Morris has shed new light on the origins of the Israel-Palestine conflict. But Morris has also called the whole of the Palestinian people "sick, psychotic," "serial killers," whom Israel must "imprison" or "execute," and "barbarians" around whom "something like a cage has to be built."[821] In recent years, he's become an outright propagandist and serial liar.[822] Should I acknowledge his scholarly findings? Of course. Should I "respect" him? Of course not. I can accord respect to his professional labors but that respect does not carry over to *him*, his person. Incidentally, if he thus depicted any other nationality, it's hard to conceive that Morris would not have suffered professionally. Yet his reputation as an objective authority on the Israel-Palestine conflict survives unimpaired to this day.

Would I have fared better in academia if, in my professional life, I had strictly adhered to its protocols of civility? In 2006, I parsed the legal controversy surrounding the wall Israel has constructed in the occupied West Bank. The Oxford University law professor who argued the Wall case before the International Court of Justice described my article as "exceptionally clear" and "beautifully clear." Israel's leading authority on international law, Tel Aviv University president Yoram Dinstein, provisionally accepted the article for publication in the *Israel Yearbook on Human Rights*, which he edited. However, because it was an annual, the article's publication would have been held up 20 months, whereas I hoped for it to have an immediate political impact. I decided instead to go with the *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, which had a shorter timeline to publication date. The editors couldn't have been more forthcoming at first: they were "delighted to extend an offer," "extremely impressed," and "truly excited." But shortly after I signed and sent off the publication agreement, copyright license, and offprint form, the journal's editor-in-chief, Shawn M. Bates, underwent an abrupt change of heart: "I am no longer certain that it is in either of our best interests for the *Georgetown Journal of International Law* to be the one to publish it…. I do believe it in both of our best interests to discontinue this relationship." The article was nixed. Did Bates belatedly realize—or was he made to realize—*who* had written it? Georgetown Law Center unconditionally backed Bates: "We see no basis for questioning the editor's judgment" (Monica Stearns, currently "Director of Logistics"). Or consider this lamentable (contemptible?) episode. In 2013, I wrote an article juxtaposing the legal status of apartheid South Africa's occupation of Namibia with the legal status of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. A leading legal specialist on the subject opined: "I am deeply impressed with your scholarship and thoroughness. You have certainly attained the highest legal standards.

This may all sound a bit corny. But I really mean it. I greatly admire the reasoning and research…. In my writings I have not explored the question [you pose]. Now I realize its importance … you have persuaded me…. So … full marks!" He encouraged me to submit the article to a distinguished European journal of international law. Breaching professional protocol, the editors peremptorily rejected the article without seeking peer review. The specialist intervened on my behalf on the grounds that I had been denied "due process." The editors then agreed to send out the article for peer review. Both anonymous reviewers trashed the article because "it is very polemical, too much so for an academic journal" (in other words, how could I compare the two situations?), "the piece is way, way too long," "it is not divided into identifiable sections," and "the footnotes are of extraordinary length." The last criticism[823] must amuse: a typical law journal article footnotes every word except the definite and indefinite articles, while the ratio between main and footnote text usually stands at 1:100.

* * *

Before leaving this topic, it repays situating the point at issue in a larger context. Although it pretends to be the seat, even the citadel, of rationality, academia can be the most morally incongruous of places. In the ranking of professional crimes and misdemeanors, for example, plagiarism is to academia what first-degree murder is to domestic law and genocide to international law—the ultimate crime. Scholarly misrepresentation in the humanities falls well below it,[824] in the proximity of using an office computer to surf for porn. It's a strange thing, that in a calling whose *fons et origo* is pursuit of Truth, the misappropriation of a couple of sentences evokes infinitely greater outrage than the wholesale mangling of data and source material. On a personal level, I witnessed this curious phenomenon after

publication of my book, *Beyond Chutzpah*. Some 140 pages painstakingly documented Professor Dershowitz's falsification of Israel's human rights record, while a 25-page appendix documented his plagiarism from a notorious Zionist hoax. The fallout from the book focused *exclusively* on the plagiarism allegation. Likewise, the crime of incivility occupies a perverse place at the summit of academia's moral hierarchy: Heavens to Betsy you should be uncivil to a "colleague"! But when you consider that many Vietnam War-era professors at elite universities "were discovered to be working, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly, on such topics as counterinsurgency and 'lethal research' for the State Department, the C.I.A., or the Pentagon";[825] when you consider that elite universities have eagerly recruited and handsomely compensated the likes of John Yoo and Condoleezza Rice; when you consider that professors at our top schools eagerly rationalize every conceivable *crime d'état* if it promises a crumb of power or privilege in return—when you consider all this, doesn't the question whether or not a professor treats his colleagues according to Emily Post's rules of etiquette reduce to either "pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities,"[826] or a flimsy pretext to deny a person the right to teach because he is the bearer of unwelcome truths?

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Conclusion to Part II

In 2007, DePaul University denied me tenure on the stated grounds that I was lacking in civility.[827]

Office of the President

June 8, 2007

Dear Dr. Finkelstein:

After careful and lengthy consideration of the recommendations and materials forwarded to me by the faculty review committees at the university, college, and department levels, I uphold the decision of the University Board on Promotion and Tenure ("UBPT") to deny your application for tenure and promotion to associate professor.

According to DePaul's Faculty Handbook, the President can only overturn the UBPT's recommendation in rare circumstances and for compelling reasons. I find no compelling reasons to overturn the UBPT's decision.

The Political Science Department voted 9-3 in favor of tenure, submitting statements for the majority and minority, with a rejoinder from the majority. The College Personnel Committee voted 5-0 to support tenure and promotion, with reservations that it asked Dean Charles Suchar to note in his report. Dean Suchar issued a written opinion against tenure. The UBPT voted 4-3 against tenure, submitting a summary of its deliberations which is quoted in its entirety below:

By majority vote, the [UBPT] does not recommend promotion to associate professor with tenure for Norman Finkelstein. Aware of the controversies surrounding this case, the [UBPT] has been particularly mindful of the need to follow the policies and procedures outlined in the Faculty Handbook. In doing so, however, the [UBPT] was reminded of broader expectations and professional standards by which the faculty at DePaul are obliged to comport themselves as members of the academic profession and as members of the DePaul intellectual community. The [UBPT] acknowledges Professor Finkelstein's record of accomplishment. By all accounts, he is an excellent teacher, popular with his students and effective in the classroom. He is a nationally known scholar and public intellectual, considered provocative, challenging and intellectually interesting, although the dossier reveals some division of opinion as to the soundness of some of his scholarship. Although the two external reviewers are favorable, comments from the department minority report are critical of the accuracy of some of the evidence he uses in his scholarship and the cogency of some of his arguments. The [UBPT] found his service at the departmental level to be limited, with no service at the college or university level.

Notwithstanding the strength of some aspects of Dr. Finkelstein's record, the [UBPT] expressed several concerns touching upon his scholarship, specifically what they consider the intellectual character of his work and his persona as a public intellectual. The [UBPT] acknowledges that Dr. Finkelstein is a controversial author, provocative and challenging. Yet, some might interpret parts of his scholarship as "deliberately hurtful" as well as provocative more for inflammatory effect than to carefully critique or challenge accepted assumptions. Criticism has been expressed for his inflammatory style and personal attacks in his writings and intellectual debates. These concerns are relevant to the [UBPT] in the recognition that an academic's reputation is intrinsically tied to the institution of which he or she is affiliated. It was questioned by some whether Dr. Finkelstein effectively contributes to the public discourse on sensitive societal issues.

The [UBPT] came to its recommendation after a lengthy and thoughtful discussion. Great effort was made to remain objective and to view both sides of the argument fairly. The vote accurately reflects the complexities of this case.

In addition to the UBPT statement, I have considered the fact that reviewers at all levels, both for and against tenure, commented upon your ad hominem attacks on scholars with whom you disagree. In the opinion of those opposing tenure, your unprofessional personal attacks divert the conversation

away from consideration of ideas, and polarize and simplify conversations that deserve layered and subtle consideration. As such, they believe your work not only shifts toward advocacy and away from scholarship, but also fails to meet the most basic standards governing scholarly discourse within the academic community.

Indeed, as the American Association of University Professors has recognized, all professors have basic obligations, as colleagues in the community of scholars: (1) to "not discriminate against or harass colleagues," (2) to "respect and defend the free inquiry of associates," (3) to "show due respect for the opinions of others," and (4) to "acknowledge academic debt and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues."

Related principles are stated in DePaul's Faculty Handbook, which articulates the University's goal of creating "an environment in which persons engaged in learning and research exercise [academic] freedom and respect it in others." This goal is central to furthering the University's Mission of "ennobling the God-given dignity of each person." Accordingly, the section of our Faculty Handbook entitled "Faculty Rights and Responsibilities" imposes on every faculty member the obligation "[t]o respect the rights of other persons to hold and express different intellectual positions," and "to exercise impartiality in passing professional judgments on colleagues." DePaul's Faculty Handbook requires DePaul professors to know and understand our Mission and these principles, and conduct themselves and their scholarly work accordingly.

Scholars must be free to write about even the most controversial issues and to disagree vociferously about each

other's work. But tactics such as ad hominem attacks threaten, rather than enhance, academic freedom. They have no place in the scholarly process. Violations of professional ethical norms that appear in published work are particularly egregious. In contrast to informal, spontaneous spoken comments, written scholarship is the product of reflection, editing, and consideration.

The UBPT has determined that your scholarship does not meet DePaul's tenure standards. Moreover, on the record before me, I cannot in good faith conclude that you honor the obligations to "respect and defend the free inquiry of associates," "show due respect for the opinions of others," and "strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues." Nor can I conclude that your scholarship honors our University's commitment to creating an environment in which all persons engaged in research and learning exercise academic freedom and respect it in others.

I am well aware of the outside interest in this decision, and the many ways in which the university community was "lobbied" both to grant and to deny tenure. Examining the written record, I am satisfied that the faculty review process maintained its independence from this unwelcome attention. As much as some would like to create the impression that our process and decision have been influenced by outside interests, they are mistaken.

At DePaul University, the faculty tenure review process is lengthy, extensive and undertaken with great seriousness. The final decision is one of balancing the various arguments for and against tenure. The Handbook allows the President to overturn the UBPT's decision only in rare circumstances and

for compelling reasons. Having reviewed all the materials, I uphold the UBPT's recommendation.

As a result of this decision, this letter shall also serve as formal notice that the 2007-2008 academic year shall be the terminal year of your employment at DePaul University as a full time faculty member, with an effective termination date of June 30, 2008. A revised contract will be issued and mailed to your home address within the week.

If you wish to discuss this decision, you are free to speak with the Provost, Helmut P. Epp. You can call the Office of the Provost at 312 362 8875 to make an appointment.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M.
President

cc: Charles Suchar, Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Michael Budde, Chair, Department of Political Science

Was this a just decision? Raul Hilberg was the founder and dean of Holocaust Studies. In the midst of my tenure battle and shortly before his death, Hilberg publicly weighed in on my case.[828]

I read *The Holocaust Industry*, which was published about seven years ago, even as I, myself, was researching actions brought against Swiss companies, notably banks, but also other enterprises in insurance and in manufacturing. And the gist of all of these claims, all of these actions, was that somehow the Swiss banks, in particular, and other enterprises, as well, owed money to Jews or the survivors or the living descendants of

people who were victims. The actions were brought by claims lawyers, by the World Jewish Congress, which joined them, and a blitz was launched in the newspapers. Congressmen and senators were mobilized, officials of regulatory agencies in New York and elsewhere. Threats were issued in the nature of withdrawal of pension funds, of boycotts, of bad publicity.

And I was struck by the fact, even as I, myself, was researching the same territory that Professor Finkelstein was covering, that the Swiss did not owe that money, that the $1,250,000,000 that were agreed as a settlement to be paid to the claimants was something that in very plain language was extorted from the Swiss. I had, in fact, relied upon the same sources that Professor Finkelstein used, perhaps in addition some Swiss items. I was in Switzerland at the height of the crisis, and I heard from so-called forensic accountants about how totally surprised the Swiss were by this outburst. There is no other word for it.

Now, Finkelstein was the first to publish what was happening in his book, *The Holocaust Industry*. And when I was asked to endorse the book, I did so with specific reference to these claims. I felt that within the Jewish community over the centuries, nothing like it had ever happened. And even though these days a couple of billion dollars are sometimes referred to as an accounting error and not worthy of discussion, there is a psychological dimension here which must not be underestimated.

I was also struck by the fact that Finkelstein was being attacked over and over. And granted, his style is a little different from mine, but I was saying the same thing, and I had published my results in that three-volume work, published in 2003 by Yale University Press, and I did not hear from

anybody a critical word about what I said, even though it was the same substantive conclusion that Finkelstein had offered. So that's the gist of the matter right then and there.

I believe Finkelstein was criticized mainly for the style that he employed. And he was vulnerable. And it was clear to me already years ago that some campaigns were launched—from what sector, I didn't know—to remove him from the academic world. Years ago, I got a phone call from someone who was in charge of a survivors' group in California who told me that Finkelstein had been ousted from a job in New York City at a university—actually, a college there—and this was done under pressure.

And then, again, I gave a lecture a year and a half ago in Chicago, which is the place where Finkelstein had been employed at DePaul University, and my lecture was about Auschwitz, and it was based on the records, which we've now recovered from Moscow, about the history of this camp. Not exactly a simple topic. But there was a question period, and I awaited pertinent questions, when someone rose from his chair and asked, "Should Finkelstein be tenured?" Now, for heaven's sake, I said to myself, what is going on here?

And whether he's being intimidated, whether he is in a situation where, whatever else may be happening, the employers are being intimidated, it's hard for me to say, but there is very clearly a campaign, which was made very obvious in *The Wall Street Journal*, when Professor Dershowitz wrote in a style which is highly uncharacteristic of the editorial page of this newspaper, which incidentally I read religiously. So I, myself, cannot fully explain this outburst, but it clearly emanates from the same anger, from the same revolt, that prompted the whole action against the Swiss to begin with.

Let me say at the outset, I would not, unasked, offer advice to the university in which he now serves. Having been in a university for 35 years myself and engaged in its politics, I know that outside interferences are most unwelcome. I will say, however, that I am impressed by the analytical abilities of Finkelstein. He is, when all is said and done, a highly trained political scientist who was given a Ph.D. degree by a highly prestigious university. This should not be overlooked. Granted, this, by itself, may not establish him as a scholar.

However, leaving aside the question of style—and here, I agree that it's not my style either—the substance of the matter is most important here, particularly because Finkelstein, when he published this book, was alone. It takes an enormous amount of academic courage to speak the truth when no one else is out there to support him. And so, I think that given this acuity of vision and analytical power, demonstrating that the Swiss banks did not owe the money, that even though survivors were beneficiaries of the funds that were distributed, they came, when all is said and done, from places that were not obligated to pay that money. That takes a great amount of courage in and of itself. So I would say that his place in the whole history of writing history is assured, and that those who in the end are proven right triumph, and he will be among those who will have triumphed, albeit, it so seems, at great cost.

* * *

After being denied tenure, I was unable ever again to find gainful employment. Am I bitter? Yes. Am I defeated? No. His days among the living at an end as his assassination impended, Martin Luther King

preached before the assembled crowd of sanitation workers whose cause he had embraced that, even as he valued life—*longevity has its place*—having ascended the steep incline, reached the mountaintop, and glimpsed the Promised Land of Truth and Justice, all else, if not small change, loomed small by comparison.

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Is there anything a man can do, short of swindling or forgery, (à fortiori a woman,) which will so surely gain him the reputation of a dangerous, or, at least, an unaccountable person, as daring, without either rank or reputation as a warrant for the eccentricity, to make a practice of forming his opinions for himself?

—John Stuart Mill

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1 I am informed by my editor, Deborah Maccoby, that Benda's depiction of Jesus as the type of martyr who is cancelled, like Socrates, by his or her own society is not supported by modern scholarship. Historical evidence indicates that Jesus was tried and executed as a rebel against Rome, not as a blasphemer against the Jewish religion. See S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: 1967) and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (London: 1968); Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: 1961); Hyam Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance* (New York: 1980).

2 Editorial, "Malcolm X," *New York Times* (22 February 1965).

3 James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A dream or a nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: 1991), p. 239.

4 Michael Walzer, "Peace in the Middle East," *New York Times* (6 October 1974). To this day, the book still rewards a reader's investment in it.

5 "approximately the equivalent of the English term old fart, old geezer." (*Wiktionary*)

6 Bari Weiss, *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (New York: 2019), p. 206.

7 "Interview with Paul Sweezy," *Monthly Review* (April 1987). See also Sweezy's wonderfully evocative interview with Andor Skotnes in the Columbia Oral History Project (1986-87, unpublished).

8 Bertrand Russell, "British and American Nationalism" (1945).

9 Robert Trivers, *Deceit and Self-Deception: Fooling yourself the better to fool others* (New York: 2011), p. 16.

10 Malcolm W. Browne, "What is Intelligence, and Who Has It?," *New York Times Book Review* (16 October 1994).

11 Raymond Bonner, "The Diplomat and the Killer," *Atlantic* (11 February 2016).

12 These political engagements unfolded as postmodernism burst onto the academic scene and borrowed a lot of its language. I will refrain from further comment as I've not read much of the postmodern corpus. The little I did read was unintelligible and persuaded me it wasn't worth the effort.

13 Frederick Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and Education" (1894).

14 Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: 1971), p. 48.

15 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the veil* (New York: 1920), p. 16.

16 But compare King's nuanced assessment of the emerging Black Power Movement:

> Black Power is a psychological reaction to the psychological indoctrination that led to the creation of the perfect slave. While this reaction has often led to negative and unrealistic responses and has frequently brought about intemperate words and actions, one must not overlook the positive value in calling the Negro to a new sense of manhood, to a deep feeling of racial pride and to an audacious appreciation of his heritage. The Negro must be grasped by a new realization of his dignity and worth. He must stand up amid a system that still oppresses him and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of his own value. He must no longer be ashamed of being black. (Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here* (Boston: 2010), pp. 41-42)

17 Michael Walzer, *The Company of Critics: Social criticism and political commitment in the twentieth century* (New York: 1988).

18 In a letter (1917) to a comrade and intimate, Rosa had written:

> What do you want with this theme of the "special suffering of the Jews"? I am just as much concerned with the poor victims on the rubber plantations of Putumayo, the Blacks in Africa with whose corpses the Europeans play catch […] [Their cries] resound within me so strongly that I have no special place in my heart for the ghetto. I feel at home in the entire world, wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears.

Walzer didn't quote her actual words in his text, perhaps as it wouldn't have cast *him* in the best of lights.

19 It might be argued that if Black youth had more career opportunities, they wouldn't spend so many hours perfecting their game. But why suppose this and not genuine love for the sport? If violin-playing occupied a special place in Jewish homes, and so many of the great 20th century violinists were Jewish—Heifitz, Menuhin, Perlman—was that because Jews lacked other career choices?

20 It was Black militant Stokely Carmichael, I think, who quipped in the 1960s, "You say African-Americans aren't good at math and science, that's why they're not admitted to Stuyvesant, Bronx High School of Science or Brooklyn Tech. Okay, but how come they aren't admitted to the High School of Music and Art, are you telling me we can't sing and dance?" (These were the top public high schools in New York City.)

21 It might be noticed in passing that cancel culture doesn't consistently demand proportional representation: symphony orchestras, yes, but—so far, at any rate—Olympic teams, no.

22 Russell could be an impossible snob. Of an acquaintance, he wrote: "He is too democratic for me—he said his charwoman was more in contact with real things than anybody else he knew. But what can a charwoman know of the spirits of great men or the records of fallen empires or the haunting visions of art and reason?" (*Autobiography* (New York: 2004), pp. 165, 168)

23 In this scrupulously accurate account, Egypt looms large, Palestine small. The politics of Palestine receive only fleeting attention.

24 On one occasion, I was in his presence while Israel was carrying out one of its periodic massacres of Palestinians. Momentarily enraged, he then apologized: "You don't understand, they are killing *my* people."

25 Tellingly, I am told by one of his biographers that Said's last major work, *Culture and Imperialism*, jettisoned the postmodernist claptrap and was instead anchored in solid but wholly conventional literary analysis.

26 I set aside here the fundamental myth perpetuated by the Court: that affirmative action programs marked a sharp break with hitherto meritocratic admissions standards in higher education. Only Justice Blackmun in his separate opinion took notice, if just in passing, of the elephant in the room: "It is somewhat ironic to have us so deeply disturbed over a program where race is an element of consciousness, and yet to be aware of the fact, as we are, that institutions of higher learning … have given conceded preferences up to a point to those possessed of athletic skills, to the children of alumni, to the affluent who may bestow their largesse on the institutions, and to those who have connections with celebrities, the famous, and the powerful." The medical school to which Bakke applied and which rejected him (University of California, Davis) set aside as many as five spots each academic year for offspring of prominent politicians and financial donors. (Terry H. Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness: A history of affirmative action* (New York: 2004), p. 152; see also pp. 246-47) Further to

the point, a recent study found that 43 percent of white applicants accepted at Harvard University were either athletes, legacies, or the children of donors and faculty. Only about a quarter of those students would have been accepted to the school, the study concluded, without those admissions advantages. (Peter Arcidiacono et al., "Legacy and Athlete Preferences at Harvard," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 2019) Likewise, the Supreme Court ultimately proved blind to the economic foundations of social inequality in its landmark 1954 desegregation decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*. Its departure point was that the segregated school districts under review provided, or would soon provide, materially equal facilities to Blacks and whites; it still found that "intangible" (e.g., psychological) factors rendered the segregated facilities unequal; and it concluded that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." (Notice it said: *Separate* not *Segregated*.) Without going into details, this last claim is patently untrue. Except on bigoted premises, there's every reason to suppose that separate women's colleges such as Wellesley and Mount Holyoke or historically Black colleges such as Howard and Morehouse can be the equal of any other higher education institution *if* their students come from advantaged backgrounds and the school endowments are equal.

27 Inter alia, the Court majority maintained that it could not be in the business of stipulating which "oppressed groups" deserved special dispensation, especially as the candidates for such status changed over time ("The kind of variable sociological and political analysis necessary to produce such rankings simply does not lie within the judicial competence—even if they otherwise were politically feasible and socially desirable"). As a case in point, when *Bakke* was decided, Asians qualified for affirmative action. Nowadays, if admission to Harvard were based on strict meritocratic criteria, Asian enrolment would be roughly on par with white enrolment. In other words, if, for the sake of equitable representation, quotas were once needed to bring Asians in, they're now needed to keep them out. *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc., v. President and Fellows of Harvard College (Harvard Corporation)* (17 November 2014; see especially paras. 299, 436).

28 "Physicians serve a heterogeneous population. An otherwise qualified medical student with a particular background—whether it be ethnic, geographic, culturally advantaged or disadvantaged—may bring to a professional school of medicine experiences, outlooks, and ideas that enrich the training of its student body and better equip its graduates to render with understanding their vital service to humanity."

29 In fact, bigoted premises underpin not just conservative but also liberal opinion in landmark Supreme Court cases. Whereas the majority in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) notoriously upheld the constitutionality of segregation, Justice Harlan in his celebrated liberal dissent just as scandalously asserted that "the white race [was] … the dominant race in this country … in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and power," and "*it will continue to be for all time* if it remains true to its great heritage and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty" (emphasis added). In the 1954 *Brown* decision, the Court concluded that separate educational facilities couldn't be equal because Black students would be denied the opportunity to "engage in discussions and exchange views" with white students. If it didn't reckon a reciprocal loss to white students, that must be because the liberal Court assumed they wouldn't be made much the wiser by such intercourse with

Blacks.

30 "If petitioner's purpose is to assure within its student body some specified percentage of a particular group merely because of its race or ethnic origin, such a preferential purpose must be rejected not as insubstantial but as facially invalid. Preferring members of any one group for no reason other than race or ethnic origin is discrimination for its own sake. This the Constitution forbids." It's hard not to notice that the Court's opinion suffers from incoherence. On the one hand, it states that the Constitution enjoins an affirmative action program based strictly on race or ethnic origin. On the other hand, the Court allows for a program that privileges diverse "experiences, outlooks, and ideas" and "qualifications and characteristics," in which the candidate's race or ethnic origin can be "a single, though important, element" in admissions. But if "preferring members of any one group for no reason other than race or ethnic origin is discrimination for its own sake. This the Constitution forbids"—why then isn't using "race or ethnic origin" as a "single, though important, element" in admissions also unconstitutional? Be it standing alone or as one among several, this criterion either does or doesn't pass legal muster. Further, the Court rules out an admission policy based on the selection of "some specified percentage of a particular group merely because of its race or ethnic origin": that's "discrimination for its own sake" and "simple ethnic diversity." In other words, the Court rejects a superficial Benetton-ad approach to diversity as devoid of redeeming educational value ("beneficial educational pluralism"). But why then should race and ethnic origin be a "single, though important, element" in admissions? If it's "merely" race or ethnic origin, if it's "discrimination for its own sake," if it's Benetton-style "simple ethnic diversity," then, be it the unique factor or one factor among many, race and ethnic origin make no substantive contribution to diversity and thus shouldn't be considered in admissions. The Court goes on to specify that "genuine diversity" would include such qualities as "exceptional personal talents, unique work or service experience, leadership potential, maturity, demonstrated compassion, a history of overcoming disadvantage, ability to communicate with the poor." But it also states that "race or ethnic background may be deemed a 'plus' in a particular applicant's file" (citing Harvard's affirmative action program, of which the Court approves). Why the "plus": how would skin color in and of itself, any more than eye or hair color, contribute to "genuine diversity"? Finally, the Court rules illegal the University of California affirmative action program, while it approves the Harvard University affirmative action program. Both programs set aside seats in the entering medical school class for "disadvantaged" minorities, and both programs put a premium on race and ethnic origin in the selection process. Except for Harvard's euphemism (it acknowledges giving "some attention to numbers" rather than openly conceding a quota), the two programs didn't differ.

31 Robeson, *Here I Stand*, p. 18.

32 Robeson, *Here I Stand*, p. 2; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: 1989), p. 35.

33 Frederick Douglass, "The Self-Made Man" (1893).

34 David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of freedom* (New York: 2018), p. 426.

35 Of this internalized inferiority, Du Bois' observations from nearly a century ago by and large still ring true:

> When the Negro despairs of duplicating white development, his despair is not always because the paths to this development are shut in his face, but back of this lurks too often a lack of faith in essential Negro possibilities, parallel to similar attitudes on the part of the whites. Instead of this proving anything concerning the truth, it is simply a natural phenomenon. Negroes, particularly the better class Negroes, are brought up like other Americans despite the various separations and segregations. They share, therefore, average American culture and current American prejudices. It is almost impossible for a Negro boy trained in a white Northern high school and a white college to come out with any high idea of his own people or any abiding faith in what they can do; or for a Negro trained in the segregated schools of the South, wholly to escape the deadening environment of insult and caste, even if he happens to have the good teachers and teaching facilities, which poverty almost invariably denies him. He may rationalize his own individual status as exceptional. He can well believe that there are many other exceptions, but he cannot ordinarily believe that the mass of Negro people have possibilities equal to the whites. (*Dusk of Dawn* (New York: 2007), pp. 96-97)

36 The principle is as true on the micro-level. If ultra-conservative Dick Cheney embraced lesbian rights and gay marriage, it wasn't because a recondite scientific study persuaded him they were normal; it's because his own daughter came out and married a woman. Put otherwise, as the dykes poured forth, the dikes of hate gave way.

37 *New York Times* (28 October 1990).

38 In a 2014 book published by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (F.I.R.E.), *Unlearning Liberty: Campus censorship and the end of American debate,* author Greg Lukianoff deplored the "egregious case" of an itinerant adjunct at DePaul University who was offered but refused conditional rehire after a political altercation with students; he didn't notice, however, this writer's highly politicized tenure denial at DePaul that garnered national headlines. The author also waxed indignant over a decision by Yale University Press to delete images of the prophet Mohammed in a forthcoming publication (apparently from fear for its physical safety); he didn't notice, however, Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz's correspondence with California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to block publication of a University of California Press book by this writer.

39 Du Bois, although far from lacking in carnal knowledge (his biographer David Levering Lewis describes him as a "priapic adulterer"), recalled in his *Autobiography* that, when he was already at the ripe age of 60,

> in the midst of my career there burst on me a new and undreamed of aspect of sex. A young man, long my disciple and student, then my co-helper and successor to part of my work, was suddenly arrested for molesting men in public places. *I had before that time no conception of homosexuality.* I had never understood the tragedy of Oscar Wilde. I dismissed my co-worker forthwith, and spent heavy days regretting my act. (*The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decade of its first century* (New York: 1970), p. 282; emphasis added)

The oddity is not that he sacked the poor fellow, but that he later felt remorse. Also to the point, Du Bois figured as a preeminent aesthetics arbiter during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, when many of the leading male Black writers were homosexual. Indeed, his own daughter wedded a prominent homosexual writer, Countee Cullen, but the marriage quickly dissolved as Cullen went to Europe with his male lover, not his wife, on the

honeymoon. In another testament to those benighted times, when a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case on homosexuality was being argued, Lewis Powell confided in fellow Justice Harry Blackmun, "I've never known a homosexual in my life." It happened that two homosexuals were "in his chambers that very moment." (William N. Eskridge Jr., *Dishonorable Passions: Sodomy laws in America, 1861-2003* (New York: 2008), pp. 237, 243-44)

40 In his dissenting opinion in *Lawrence*, Justice Scalia recalled the cheery stat that there were "20 sodomy prosecutions and 4 executions during the colonial period [in the U.S.]." Both Burger and Scalia got the history right, but isn't it a tad odd to oppose gay rights by adducing such gruesome facts?

41 PEN America, *And Campus for All: Diversity, inclusion, and freedom of speech at U.S. universities* (2016).

42 I.e., noticing class inequities in the distribution of wealth—which, if you're a rich woke leftist, is a thought crime of the first order.

43 Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman, *Free Speech on Campus* (New Haven: 2017), pp. 82, 103-4.

44 Zechariah Chafee Jr., *Free Speech in the United States* (Cambridge: 1941), pp. 23-24.

45 Harry Kalven, Jr., *A Worthy Tradition: Freedom of speech in America* (New York: 1988).

46 The quoted phrase in *Chaplinsky* is taken from Zechariah Chafee. It ought to go without saying that banning, e.g., Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* because it contains the word "nigger" falls outside such a prohibition.

47 Chemerinsky and Gillman, *Free Speech*, pp. 3, 121. Current constitutional law apparently allows for the occasional expression of a derogatory epithet based on an immutable characteristic, but not its repeated use as that would adversely affect the targeted student's college experience. Brett A. Sokolow et al., "The Intersection of Free Speech and Harassment Rules," *American Bar Association Human Rights* (Fall 2011).

48 Chafee, *Free Speech*, pp. 57, 59, 61, 186.

49 Nadine Strossen, *Hate: Why we should resist it with free speech, not censorship* (New York: 2018). In a different political register, Leon Trotsky made the same point:

> Under the conditions of the bourgeois regime, all suppression of political rights and freedom, no matter whom they are directed against in the beginning, in the end inevitably bear down upon the working class, particularly its most advanced elements. That is a law of history. ("Why I Consented to Appear before the Dies Committee" (11 December 1939), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940* (New York: 1977), p. 132)

50 After a trip to China, where he met Mao Tse-tung, Du Bois wrote: "The truth is there and I saw it." That's a bit more complicated. The truth he imagined seeing was China as the cutting edge of World Communism, which turned out to be a fiction. But it's also true that the China he saw did emerge as the cutting edge of World Capitalism, which will likely dominate the world's stage for a long time to come. So even as he misread the future, Du Bois did get something fundamentally right. (*The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A soliloquy of viewing my life from the last decade of its first century*)

51 A leading historian of eugenics in the Deep South writes:

> The concept of salvation and sanctification for all, solely by divine grace, challenged eugenics doctrines of fixed, inherited degeneracy and superiority.… Even though the concept of religious brotherhood did not overcome doctrines of White supremacy, it

offered a sense of extended kinship that stood at odds with eugenic proposals to segregate or sterilize defective individuals; in the words of the beloved hymn, 'His blood can make the foulest clean.'" (Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science*)

The force of opposition to eugenics in the South also sprang from a wariness of government intrusion in human reproduction, on the one hand, and the deficit of scientific "experts" lobbying in favor of eugenics legislation, on the other.

52 Between 1907 and 1960, more than 60,000 Americans were forcibly sterilized.

53 Katha Pollitt, "Nora Ephron," *The Nation* (28 June 2012).

54 Likewise, the Court peremptorily dismissed the Hippocratic Oath's injunction against abortion as rooted in "dogma" and cramped by "rigidity."

55 "Logically, of course, a legitimate state interest in this area need not stand or fall on acceptance of the belief that life begins at conception or at some other point prior to live birth. In assessing the State's interest, recognition may be given to the less rigid claim that as long as at least potential life is involved, the State may assert interests beyond the protection of the pregnant woman alone."

56 If, as the Court asserted, there's a "compelling State interest" in "protecting prenatal *life*" (my emphasis), and if the Court determined that the "compelling point" at which the State must intercede in order to protect prenatal life was viability outside the womb, then it effectively established viability as the point at which life began. Otherwise, why wouldn't the State intercede to protect prenatal life prior to viability? Indeed, Justice Blackmun, who wrote the *Roe* opinion, justified the viability cutoff in a subsequent abortion case, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), on the grounds that it demarcated the onset of human life: "The viability line reflects the biological facts and truths of fetal development; it marks that threshold moment prior to which a fetus cannot survive separate from the woman and cannot reasonably and objectively be regarded as a subject of rights or interests distinct from, or paramount to, those of the pregnant woman." If, however, the fetus were a human life prior to viability, it arguably could claim "rights or interests distinct from ... those of the pregnant woman."

57 In private conference, the Court tacitly acknowledged that it arbitrarily determined the various temporal delineations in *Roe*. David J. Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality: The right to privacy and the making of* Roe v. Wade (New York: 1994), pp. 580-86, 597-98, 696; Joshua Prager, *The Family Roe: An American story* (New York: 2021), pp. 99-100. Although it conceded the "want of a line that is clear," *Casey* upheld the *Roe* criterion on the grounds that "there is no line other than viability which is more workable." But except on the unproven and unprovable assumption that neither marks off the beginning of life, why isn't conception or live birth just as "workable," indeed, more "workable"? (The "viability" line is ever-receding as medical technology improves.) It would have been more coherent and true to the facts if the Court had frankly admitted: "more *politically* workable." On "this arbitrary line" of viability, see also *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organizations* (2022, overturning *Roe*) as well as Chief Justice Roberts' concurrence. Laurence Tribe, Professor of Constitutional Law Emeritus at Harvard, asserts that attaching a primary interest in a fetus's life at conception cannot but derive from "particular religious traditions," is "all but invariably grounded in one or another religious tradition," is "inherently sectarian," etc.;

that such a religious determination contradicts "our secular constitutional order"; and that the "theocratic" zealotry embodied in *Dobbs* thus wrongly "replac[ed] the compromise between life and liberty embodied in *Roe*." ("Deconstructing Dobbs," *New York Review of Books*, 22 September 2022) It is not at all obvious, however, why attaching a primary interest in a fetus's life at the point of conception is intrinsically a religious determination (can't abortion be opposed on secular grounds?) whereas attaching the primary interest at viability necessarily constitutes a secular determination (on what secular criterion does life begin at viability?). Nor is it obvious why *Roe*'s allegedly secular determination is to be preferred over *Dobbs*' allegedly religious determination, unless it is to be precluded that a religious determination can be grounded in a universal moral precept—such as the sanctity of life—that a secularist would also want to embrace. Put otherwise, a religious tenet isn't "inherently sectarian," as it can be consonant or overlap with a secular tenet; while both secular and religious tenets can accord with the universalist Kantian moral imperative. Indeed, can't it be that a religious tenet is articulated with more stringency than this or that secular iteration of it? Incidentally, Tribe's anticlerical screed contains, besides, a flagrant secular falsehood. One ground of *Dobbs* for overturning *Roe* was that, when *Roe* was decided, a right to abortion was not "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition." Tribe purports that "that test is plucked from" a single, now "jettisoned" Court opinion. The test of "history and tradition" to determine an unenumerated Constitutional right in fact long predates *Dobbs*, is a staple in the Court's jurisprudence (including *Roe*!), and has not been discarded by it. To be sure, the Court's liberal wing has argued that "history and tradition" shouldn't necessarily be the last word, but that it's a relevant test is not in dispute. *Dobbs* applied the tests of "text, history, and precedent" and found that *Roe* failed all three of them.

58 In particular, the derivative right to privacy. (The Court subsequently pointed as well to a Constitutional protection of personal autonomy and bodily integrity.) If the Court grounded the right to access an abortion before viability in the right to privacy, that's because it presumed the fetus was not a life. Thus it stated that the privacy right to an abortion inheres up until viability when "potential human life … becomes significantly involved." The line of cases establishing a "fundamental" privacy right was said by the Court to include a married and unmarried couple's right to use contraceptives (*Griswold*, *Eisenstadt*), an interracial couple's right to marry (*Loving*), and an individual's right to view pornography (*Stanley*). It determined that the privacy right established by these prior cases "is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." If the fetus were a life, however, then the crux of the question posed by abortion falls outside this line of cases. See *Dobbs*: "But none of these [privacy] decisions involved what is distinctive about abortion: its effect on what *Roe* termed 'potential life.'" The dissenting opinion in *Dobbs* asserts that "most obviously, the right to terminate a pregnancy arose straight out of the right to purchase and use contraception"; "*Roe* and *Casey* fit neatly into a long line of decisions protecting from government intrusion a wealth of private choices about family matters, child rearing, intimate relationships, and procreation"; "the precedents *Roe* most closely tracked were those involving contraception." Professor Tribe as well asserts that *Dobbs* "fails to establish that they [prior

Court opinions upholding a privacy right] are not *analogous* to the right to reproductive autonomy." ("Deconstructing Dobbs," emphasis in original) But whereas a privacy right might protect use of a contraceptive, disposing of a fetus "obviously" implicates a qualitatively higher order of moral-cum-legal quandaries. Were it otherwise, it would be cause for wonder why so many women agonize over the decision to have an abortion but not over the decision to use a diaphragm. Indeed, if abortion "fit neatly into" or arose "straight out of" or was easily "*analogous* to" a privacy right, the State couldn't claim a "compelling interest" (per *Roe*) at any point along the pregnancy to prohibit it. The irony is, *Roe* itself explicitly eschewed such facile reasoning:

> The pregnant woman cannot be isolated in her privacy. She carries an embryo and, later, a fetus, if one accepts the medical definitions of the developing young in the human uterus. The situation therefore is *inherently different from* [emphasis added] marital intimacy, or bedroom possession of obscene material, or marriage, or procreation, or education, with which *Eisenstadt* and *Griswold*, *Stanley*, *Loving, Skinner,* and *Pierce* and *Meyer* were respectively concerned. It is reasonable and appropriate for a State to decide that, at some point in time another interest, that of health of the mother or that of potential human life, becomes significantly involved. The woman's privacy is no longer sole and any right of privacy she possesses must be measured accordingly. [citations omitted]

It is an oddity of the defense mounted by *Roe*'s supporters that they *dis*honor it in the breach by adducing arguments that contradict it.

59 "The Court's decisions recognizing a right of privacy also acknowledge that some state regulation ... is appropriate.... [A] State may properly assert important interests ... in protecting potential life.... The privacy right involved, therefore, cannot be said to be absolute."

60 This phrase in defense of *Roe* is from the dissenting opinion in *Dobbs*.

61 In the idiom of Supreme Court jurisprudence, if life begins at conception, even if a woman's control over her own body were a "fundamental" privacy right grounded in the Constitution's "liberty" clause, still, a categorical legislative ban on abortion would survive the Court's exacting scrutiny; the State's obligation to safeguard life would almost certainly prevail over a woman's liberty right. Conversely, if life begins at live birth and bodily integrity is a "fundamental" privacy right, then no legislative ban on abortion at any point in the pregnancy would survive the Court's scrutiny; abortion would reduce to a woman's uncontroversial liberty to dispose of an inanimate object lodged in her womb. I set aside complicating factors such as severe risk to a woman's health.

62 One prominent early proponent of abortion rights reckoned that even as "in some cases" it was manifestly the "proper choice," still, "abortion is an evil," while another opposed unregulated "abortion on demand" as "it develops in both the medical profession and the laity a lack of reverence for life." (Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality*, pp. 273, 305) In the here and now, pro-choice polemicist Katha Pollitt unapologetically exhorts that abortion is not "evil, even a necessary evil" but, on the contrary, a "positive social good" that "benefits society as a whole," with no downsides attending it: "it's good for everyone," and thus an "easy decision." This one-time New Left militant has in effect adapted that standby of the 1960s, *One, Two, Three, Many Vietnams!*, to her newfound cause, as in *One, Two, Three, Many Abortions!* The more the merrier. (She nudged this reader to retrieve from memory

lane wacko Weather Underground leader Bernadine Dohrn celebrating Charles Manson's grisly cult-murder of actress Sharon Tate and two others: "First they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them, then they even shoved a fork into the pig Tate's stomach! Wild!") And what of the fetus? Throughout her manifesto, Pollitt mercilessly mocks the notion that a fertilized egg at conception is a life. But then, what about the day after the day after and the day after that? There are a few stray paragraphs—to be precise, three in a nearly 300 page book—where she brings her story up to, so to speak, the day before. "As the pregnancy progresses," Pollitt concedes, things get a wee bit messier: the fetus "wasn't exactly a person, but it was close enough." Indeed, she quietly drops the bombshells that when life begins is "essentially unresolvable" and "a contentious area about which people strongly disagree." But why let these tiny technicalities spoil the party? Repeat after Katha: *One, Two, Three, Many Abortions! One, Two, Three Many Abortions!* Katha Pollitt, *Pro: Reclaiming abortion rights* (New York: 2015), pp. 34-35 ("positive," "benefits"), 37 ("evil"), 38 ("everyone"), 41 ("easy"), 102 ("unresolvable"), 189 ("contentious"), 98 and 190-91 (when does life begin). To be candid, it's hard not to admire Pollitt. She's a gifted stylist: her prose is as muscular as that of the best male writers (uh-oh, did I just say that?) and she can be wickedly funny. But it must be said that the passages I just quoted in praise of abortion are positively sick, and her refusal to seriously engage the moral conundrum of abortion wholly dishonest.

63 Strossen, *Hate*, pp. 130, 159, 161, 174. I would want to take public notice that Strossen does mention me in her acknowledgments. I am unaware of another person of her position and rank who has displayed such principle.

64 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines *handicapped* as a condition that "substantially limits activity" whereas it defines *disabled* as "incapacitated."

65 I noticed this objectivity to be the case even in student evaluations of my teaching where one might have expected an occasional element of vindictiveness. (I was neither politically correct in the classroom nor an easy grader.)

66 *New York Times*, 28 June 2020.

67 www.democracynow.org/2014/3/6/angela_davis_on_prison_abolition_the

68 www.democracynow.org/2022/3/8/ukrainian_lgbti_activist_describes_escaping_kyiv

69 It's a must-ritual of a woke guest speaker on a college campus to begin, "I want to acknowledge that we are meeting here on stolen ancestral land of the [fill in the name] tribe." It would behoove a self-respecting tribe member to interject from the audience: "Bitch, who forced you to come? Either boycott the place or fork over your honorarium or shut the fuck up!"

70 It was so shameless that the cripple-marches had eventually to be discontinued. www.tvparty.com/embarrass-telethon2.html

71 "[I]f ... voluntary sexual conduct between consenting adults [is a constitutionally protected right], it would be difficult, except by fiat, to limit the claimed right to homosexual conduct while leaving exposed to prosecution adultery, incest, and other sexual crimes." *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986, denying constitutional protection for homosexual sodomy). In his dissenting opinion in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003, reversing *Bowers*), Justice Scalia noted the "impossibility of distinguishing homosexuality from other traditional 'morals'" such as

laws against "bigamy," "adult incest," and "bestiality." In his dissenting opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015, legalizing gay marriage), Chief Justice Roberts cogently observed:

> Although the majority randomly inserts the adjective "two" in various places, it offers no reason at all why the two-person element of the core definition of marriage may be preserved while the man-woman element may not. Indeed, from the standpoint of history and tradition, a leap from opposite-sex marriage to same-sex marriage is much greater than one from a two-person union to plural unions, which have deep roots in some cultures around the world. If the majority is willing to take the big leap, it is hard to see how it can say no to the shorter one. It is striking how much of the majority's reasoning would apply with equal force to the claim of a fundamental right to plural marriage. If "there is dignity in the bond between two men or two women who seek to marry and in their autonomy to make such profound choices" [he's quoting from the majority opinion], why would there be any less dignity in the bond between three people who, in exercising their autonomy, seek to make the profound choice to marry? If a same-sex couple has the constitutional right to marry because their children would otherwise "suffer the stigma of knowing their families are somehow lesser," why wouldn't the same reasoning apply to a family of three or more persons raising children? If not having the opportunity to marry "serves to disrespect and subordinate" gay and lesbian couples, why wouldn't the same "imposition of this disability," serve to disrespect and subordinate people who find fulfillment in polyamorous relationships?

72 I owe this point to Nico Arcilla.

73 Brandon Ambrosino, "I Wasn't Born This Way, I Choose to Be Gay," *New Republic* (28 November 2014).

74 Mary Ziegler, "The End of Roe is Coming, and It is Coming Soon," *New York Times* (1 December 2021) ("pregnant people"). "Judith Butler on *Roe vs. Wade*, Trans Rights and the War on Education," *New Statesman* (21 July 2022). Butler asserts that the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* was "probably not right" in its opinion that only members of the female "sex" got abortions. Ziegler is the leading "feminist" authority on abortion, Butler is the go-to "philosopher" of wokeness.

75 docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfPmfeDKBi25_7rUTKkhZ3cyMICQicp05ReVaeBpEdYUCkyIA/viewform

76 Judging by the photos in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, you'd think whites are an endangered species on campus.

77 If only rhetorically.

78 Perhaps the most sustained applause came, however, when Cuomo assailed the Reagan administration because "we give money to Latin American governments that murder nuns, and then we lie about it."

79 Americans used to celebrate National Brotherhood Week every February. Among Lehrer's lyrics:

> *It's fun to eulogize*
> *The people you despise,*
> *As long as you don't let them in your school.*
>
> *The poor folks hate the rich folks*
> *And the rich folks hate the poor folks.*

All of my folks hate all of your folks,
It's American as apple pie.
But during National Brotherhood Week,
National Brotherhood Week,
New Yorkers love the Puerto Ricans
Cause it's very chic.

It's national everyone smile at one another-hood week.
Be nice to people
Who are inferior to you.
It's only for a week, so have no fear.
Be grateful that it doesn't last all year.

Alas, under a Democratic administration the unctuous phoniness lasts four years.

80 On day two of the convention, of the featured speakers, only Bernie Sanders' two nominees (Bob King and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) spotlighted this agenda. A trio of presentations on the convention's third night spoke more (former U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis) or less (Hillary Clinton, Elizabeth Warren) to the Party's working-class constituency. On the final day of the convention, three minutes were given over to Joe Biden interviewing a quartet of workers, a video montage of Biden's life highlighted his working-class roots, and a few sentences of Biden's acceptance speech focused on jobs and the economy. Altogether, of the approximately nine hours of convention programming, about one-half hour was devoted to specifically working class concerns.

81 What follows are the impressions of this participant.

82 When the "Black Power" slogan first emerged in the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King recoiled. Why have a slogan, he remonstrated, "that would confuse our allies, isolate the Negro community and give many prejudiced whites, who might otherwise be ashamed of their anti-Negro feeling, a ready excuse for self-justification? Why not use the slogan 'black consciousness' or 'black equality'? These phrases would be less vulnerable and would more accurately describe what we are about. The words 'black' and 'power' together give the impression that we are talking about black domination rather than black equality." (Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here* (Boston: 2010), pp. 31-32)

83 "[The policeman] moves through Harlem, therefore, like an occupying soldier in a bitterly hostile country; which is precisely what, and where he is, and is the reason he walks in twos and threes." (James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: 1992), p. 66)

84 The annual June 19th celebration of African-African emancipation.

85 It was curious that only "racists" safely remote in time were targeted. An obvious candidate was surely Rockefeller Center, as its first president and later chairman Nelson Rockefeller ordered the massacre of inmates at Attica prison in 1971. His father, John D., who commissioned the eponymous center, was a famed robber baron responsible for the Ludlow massacre in which striking coal miners were mowed down. But confronting such murderers might have touched a raw nerve among the current powers-that-be, not a few of whom had cavorted with Nelson back then. He died in 1979 at age 70 as, according to official reports, he suffered a heart attack while perusing art books with his 25-year-old female assistant. Privately, it was said that he died of high blood pressure, 70/25, while his grandson reportedly posited that a proper obituary would have been headlined "Rockefeller blown to

death."

86 If "Jobs" preceded "Freedom," it was to secure the institutional support of the powerful and more than wee-bit racist trade-union movement. But also, the march's Black leadership such as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin were themselves militant trade unionists.

87 One factor in the success of the early Civil Rights Movement was that lucid, concrete demands—an end to segregation in public accommodations, the right to vote—were set forth and were firmly grounded in the law of the land. The protesters' collective energies were finely focused while their opponents were left little wiggle room. The demands were legally unimpeachable so opponents didn't have a moral leg to stand on. The protesters' success could be precisely quantified, and nothing feeds the energies of a movement like the racking up of victories. On the other hand, the failure to achieve any victories after much sacrifice inevitably breeds despair and cynicism; that's another good reason not to set goals beyond what's feasible. Once the "Black Power" movement set in, however, substantive victories proved elusive as no two persons, white or Black, could even agree on what "Black Power" denoted—at any rate, beyond the dubious goal of replacing white faces with Black ones in positions of power without changing the relations of power. On the indeterminacy of the "Black Power" slogan, see King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, p. 33.

88 To be sure, protesters did here and there extract substantive local concessions—e.g., a ban on the choke hold—while a historic victory would have required a much larger investment of time and energy. It is often forgotten that the Montgomery bus boycott lasted fully a year as indigent African-Americans had to car pool or trudged to work in the dead of night in the dead of winter.

89 A Google search of *Sydney Ember Bernie Sanders Heart Attack* yielded more than one million results at the time of writing.

90 "Bernie Sanders Predicted Revolution. Just Not This One" (*New York Times*, 19 June 2020).

91 "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics" (1989).

92 Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the struggle for racial equality* (New York: 2004), pp. 191-92.

93 A precursor of the Central Park Five case that played out in the 1930s. To be sure, Du Bois was critical of the Communist Party's role in defense of the Scottsboro Boys, as he thought it manipulative.

94 A 36-year-old Mississippi truck driver, McGee was accused in 1945 of raping a white woman and was executed in 1951. His defense was provided by the Communist-led Civil Rights Congress (C.R.C.). Among those on McGee's legal team was Bella Abzug, the pioneering feminist U.S. congresswoman who at the time worked for the C.R.C. Jessica Mitford's wonderful memoir of her life in the Communist Party, *A Fine Old Conflict*, provides a vivid account of her own participation in McGee's defense, including her journey to recruit an irascible William Faulkner on McGee's behalf.

95 A mathematician I consulted, Dr. Sanjeev Mahajan, had this to say:

> Crenshaw's axiom can be rephrased as follows: Two categories of oppression when combined yield an entirely new, irreducible category of oppression. This seems a fair reading of her contention that the discrimination suffered by a Black woman is distinct from the sum of the discrimination that a Black person suffers plus the discrimination that

a woman suffers. Let's then consider a single individual who suffers four categories of oppression: Black (B), Female (F), Paraplegic (P), Lesbian (L). But then, per Crenshaw, we can form entirely new categories such as {BF}, {BP}, and {BL}. Then these categories can be combined to form yet another irreducible category such as {{BF}{BP}} or {{BL}{BP}}. These categories can be further combined to yield entirely new categories of oppression such as {{{BF}{BP}} {{BL}{BP}}}, etc. Now let us, per Crenshaw's axiom, enumerate all possible irreducible categories of oppression. Given the 4 options, B F P L, there are 15 non-empty subsets, each of which is an irreducible category. Since these 15 categories are irreducible and independent, they can be combined every which way to give us 2^{15}-1= 32,767 non-empty subsets of the set of the 15 categories. Each of these 32,767 categories is an irreducible category of oppression. But then again, applying Crenshaw's axiom, since we now have a set of 32,767 categories of oppression, we can combine them in all possible configurations to get 2^{32767}-1 non-empty subsets of a set of 32,767 categories. Repeating this process, ad infinitum, we get infinitely many categories of oppression.

96 *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.*

97 The broad question whether the elevation of a Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice to Secretary of State, the election of a Barack Obama, a Hillary Clinton presidency, or a Kamala Harris vice-presidency advances the cause of human progress—apart from exploding tenacious myths about the transformative potential of elevating the oppressed into positions of power—is subject to legitimate debate. What's certain, however, is that Crenshaw's "analysis" contributes nothing to it. It's also doubtful that being a Black woman always puts her at a disadvantage. An enterprising university dean, for example, might prefer a Black woman over a Black man or white woman as it enables two affirmative action boxes to be ticked off: it's a twofer.

98 "Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when *white* women speak for and as *women*. The authoritative universal voice—usually white male subjectivity masquerading as non-racial, non-gendered objectivity—is merely transferred to those who, but for gender, share many of the same cultural, economic and social characteristics." (emphases in original)

99 She makes one lonely reference to "class" oppression per se in a seven-word footnote.

100 Being that she's a theoretician, indeed, an *important* theoretician, Crenshaw must theorize the findings of her "field" work in the jungle. Here's a sample:

> Consider the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill controversy. During the Senate hearings for the confirmation of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, Anita Hill, in bringing allegations of sexual harassment against Thomas, was rhetorically disempowered in part because she fell between the dominant interpretations of feminism and antiracism. Caught between the competing narrative tropes of rape (advanced by feminists) on the one hand and lynching (advanced by Thomas and his antiracist supporters) on the other, the race and gender dimensions of her position could not be told. This dilemma could be described as the consequence of antiracism's essentializing Blackness and feminism's essentializing womanhood. But recognizing as much does not take us far enough, for the problem is not simply linguistic or philosophical in nature. It is specifically political: the narratives of gender are based on the experience of white, middle-class women, and the narratives of race are based on the experience of Black men. The solution does not merely entail arguing for the multiplicity of identities or challenging essentialism generally. Instead, in Hill's case, for example, it would have been necessary to assert those crucial

aspects of her location that were erased, even by many of her advocates—that is, to state what difference her difference made. (Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color," *Stanford Law Review* (July 1991), pp. 1298-99)

Were she my student, I'd gently implore little Kimberlé to rewrite this gobbledygook in English. Incidentally, no one accused Thomas of "rape." The serial sins alleged against him were on the order of making a crude joke about a pubic hair on a Coca-Cola can in Hill's presence. Hill was a Baptist from a small town in Oklahoma. Deeply off-put, she was subsequently hospitalized due to stress-induced stomach pains. In light of her sheltered Baptist background, Hill clearly had a legitimate grievance. When President Bill Clinton was later accused of sexual improprieties, however, Hill publicly supported him (she contended that "the substance of sex-related accusations against President Clinton differs dramatically from those raised against Justice Thomas"), as did prominent white feminists such as Gloria Steinem. Now, that was a most telling instance of intersectionality: the convergence of woke women and raw power. Unlike Thomas, Clinton was eventually accused of rape (by Juanita Broaddrick).

101 Bearing the psychic scars of excruciating personal agony, I can attest that taking the knee *does* hurt. It was the moment I dreaded most at demonstrations.

102 It went unreported, for example, that the protesters could be verbally very aggressive as they shouted "NYPD, Suck My Dick!" right up in the cops' faces.

103 "Mayor de Blasio, Open Your Eyes. The Police Are Out of Control" (*New York Times*, 4 June 2020).

104 Nicholas Kristof, "When It Works to 'Defund the Police'" (10 June 2020); "The Statues Were Toppled. What Happens to Them Now?" (15 June 2020).

105 The Republicans and Democrats upped each other before the 2020 election in handing out bribes to potential voters. Between unemployment checks, stimulus checks, rent abatements, etc., many workers were faring better during than before the pandemic.

106 Nikole Hannah-Jones, "What Is Owed?" (30 June 2020).

107 Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *Atlantic* (15 June 2014).

108 Daily risking life and limb, S.N.C.C. members stood in the vanguard of grassroots organizing in the deep South at the inception of the Civil Rights Movement.

109 "We call for the total disruption of selected church sponsored agencies operating anywhere in the U.S. and the world. Black workers, black women, black students and the black unemployed are encouraged to seize the offices, telephones and printing apparatus of all church sponsored agencies and to hold these in trusteeship until our demands are met."

110 See Cedric Johnson, "Reparations Isn't a Political Demand":

> Some black citizens may support reparations as an ideal, but in the everyday fight to protect and advance their lived interests, other issues like policing, rising housing costs, livable wage employment, and quality education may rightly take precedence over reparations, and form the core of their political commitments. (*Jacobin*, 7 March 2016)

111 Coates recoils at even approximating the dollar amount.

112 Michael C. Kraus et al., "The Misperception of Racial Economic Inequality," *Association for Psychological Science* (2019).

113 "The movement … literally subpoenaed the conscience of a large segment of the nation to

appear before the judgment seat of morality on the whole question of civil rights." (Martin Luther King)

114 Hannah-Jones, in her *Times* essay promoting the cause of reparations, empathetically observed that "reparations are not about punishing white Americans, and white Americans are not the ones who would pay for them." But who then would? "It is the federal government that pays." Phew, what a relief!

115 "Coates fetishizes white supremacy. He makes it almighty, magical, and unremovable." (Cornel West)

116 For a fully documented account of the story I tell here, see my book, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering* (New York: 2000; expanded second paperback edition, 2003).

117 Billionaire owner of Seagram liquor and major contributor to Clinton's presidential campaign, the megalomaniacal Bronfman styled himself King of the Jews. He informed the Senate Banking Committee during hearings on Holocaust reparations that he spoke "on behalf of the Jewish people" as well as "the 6 million, those who cannot speak for themselves." Apart from the Jewish mafia, one small-town shady Shabbos goy, Alfonse "Senator Pothole" D'Amato, was in on the shakedown. He calculated that championing reparations would win over New York's Jewish community, but he anyhow lost his Senate seat after it was revealed that he had privately called his rival, Chuck Schumer (currently Senate Majority Leader), a *putzhead* (Yiddish for *dick*).

118 For details, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *Knowing Too Much: Why the American Jewish romance with Israel is coming to an end* (New York: 2012), chapter 5.

119 "Atlantic Exchange Featuring Ta-Nehisi Coates & Jeffrey Goldberg" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4vGVuh2kn4). Coates left *The Atlantic* in 2018 for greener pastures. Although "The Case" appeared in *The Atlantic* before Goldberg became editor-in-chief, it might be noticed that Coates was not above pandering to Jewish chauvinism, which would surely have endeared him to Goldberg. He depicts in his reparations story a Chicago community (Lawndale) that was originally integrated but then fell victim to white flight. The "good guys" in his morality play are beautiful Jews who "actively encouraged blacks to move into the neighborhood, seeking to make it a 'pilot community' for interracial living." The villain of the piece is Lou Fushanis, a real estate loan shark who targets ingenuous Blacks. Fushanis, it is true, was Greek-American, but his business partner and the driving force behind the predatory operation was Moe M. Forman, a Jew and "Mr. Big in Chicago's West Side slum operation … the biggest individual slum empire in the city's history." Indeed, Jews—Forman, Al Berland, Joseph Berke, Lou Wolf, Gilbert Balin—were among "the most ruthless slumlords" in Lawndale and later all of Chicago. (I am quoting from the same source Coates used, Beryl Satter's *Family Properties*.) So as not to offend the über-Jewish sensibility of *The Atlantic*'s milieu, did Coates prudently omit these inconvenient facts? The depiction of the American Jewish community as enlightened supporters of integration and civil rights in the postwar era is as tenacious as it is mythical, as anyone who lived through those years—in particular, the 1968 New York City teachers' strike that pitted a mostly Jewish union against the inner-city Black community—can attest. The truth is, notwithstanding noble exceptions, the Jewish community was as steeped in

racism as any other community in white America.

120 The most cancelled person in the U.K. was Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. Sanders' political doppelgänger, Corbyn was relentlessly vilified as an antisemite across the full spectrum of the British media from the *Telegraph* to the *Guardian* and from BBC to Sky News. As brilliant young British scholar Jamie Stern-Weiner exhaustively documented, the allegations were as fantastical as they were filthy. See Jamie Stern-Weiner, "Jeremy Corbyn Hasn't Got an 'Antisemitism Problem.' His Opponents Do," *openDemocracy* (27 April 2016); Jamie Stern-Weiner, "Labour Conference or Nuremberg Rally? Assessing the Evidence," *jamiesternweiner.wordpress.com* (12 October 2017); Jamie Stern-Weiner and Alan Maddison, "Smoke Without Fire: The myth of a "Labour antisemitism crisis,'" *Jewish Voice for Labour* (26 November 2019); Jewish Voice for Labour, *How the EHRC Got It So Wrong: Antisemitism and the Labour Party* (London:, 2021); and the contributions to Jamie Stern-Weiner, ed., *Antisemitism and the Labour Party* (London: 2019). The *New York Times*' Bari Weiss couldn't resist weighing in: "anti-Semitism that originates on the political left is more insidious and perhaps existentially dangerous [than on the political right]. If you want to see the stakes, just look across the pond, where Jeremy Corbyn, an antisemite, has successfully transformed one of the country's great parties into a hub of Jew hatred." (*How to Fight Anti-Semitism* (New York: 2019), p. 86)

121 Pointing to the racist underbelly of F.D.R.'s New Deal, Coates argues that non-race-specific economic remedies end up shortchanging Blacks. But first, Blacks did abundantly benefit from some New Deal programs and, second, there's a crucial difference today: a formidable Black political/professional class has since emerged that can safeguard the Black interest in universal programs. Oddly, Coates laments that the Affordable Care Act's "expansion of Medicaid was effectively made optional, meaning that many poor blacks in the former Confederate states do not benefit from it…. [It] will eventually expand its reach to those left out; in the meantime, black people will be injured." Shouldn't he then have supported Bernie's platform that—rectifying the structural racism that he bemoans—called for its expansion *now*? Likewise, Coates praises Harvard Law School professor Charles Ogletree's proposal of "job training and public works that takes racial justice as its mission but includes the poor of all races." Sanders' platform took class justice as its mission but disproportionately benefitted Blacks. As a practical matter, it would appear to be a distinction without much difference, except that, unlike Ogletree, Sanders anchored his platform in a plausible political coalition. In other words, Sanders' platform wasn't just woke seminar talk.

122 In the 2020 Democratic Party primary, candidates lent tepid (Cory Booker, Pete Buttigieg, Julien Castro, Kamala Harris, Amy Klobuchar) to robust (Beto O'Rourke, Elizabeth Warren) support for reparations. Senator Booker introduced a bill to investigate the viability of reparations, which Sanders eventually signed on to. Sanders also stated that if, as President, a reparations bill came across his desk, he would sign it. The one major Democratic primary contender apart from Sanders who still hoped to win over white workers was Joe Biden. Although he evaded taking a stand on reparations, Biden, tellingly, didn't evoke the woke crowd's vitriol.

123 "Why Precisely is Bernie Sanders against Reparations?," *Atlantic* (19 January 2016).

124 When pressed on a leftwing public affairs program in 2016, Coates stated that he would be voting for Sanders. (www.democracynow.org/2016/2/10/ta_nehisi_coates_is_voting_for) He stayed above the fray in the 2020 Democratic Party primary, although he singled out for praise Elizabeth Warren's stand on reparations. On the identity politics left, such as Black Lives Matter, "Black reparations" has played a role symmetrical to the "Right of Return" in Palestine solidarity politics: a radical-posturing slogan with no prospect of realization (however morally unimpeachable), but which boosted one's street cred as it alienated potential allies.

125 Boston: 2018. Hereafter: *WF*.

126 *WF*, p. 72. She is quoting "African-American scholar and filmmaker Omowale Akintunde."

127 *WF*, p. 42.

128 *WF*, p. 81.

129 *WF*, p. 80.

130 *WF*, p. 81.

131 *WF*, pp. 77-78.

132 *WF*, p. 132.

133 *WF*, p. 84—"Most of us only teach our children not to admit to prejudice. A parent training a child not to say certain things that are overtly racist is teaching the child self-censorship."

134 *WF*, p. 20; see also pp. 72-73—"All people hold prejudices, especially across racial lines in a society deeply divided by race. I can be told that everyone is equal by my parents, I can have friends of color, and I may not tell racist jokes. Yet I am still affected by the forces of racism as a member of a society in which racism is the bedrock."

135 *WF*, p. 12. At any rate, about white people. To generalize about white people "interrupts individualism," and since "individualism" denies racism (as in "I'm different"), generalizing about them is a good thing. But "racial generalization also reinforces something problematic for people of color—the continual focus on their group identity," so generalizing about Black people is a bad thing. (*WF*, p. 89) One wonders which sociological school teaches that concepts are valid if they yield a desirable result, invalid if they yield an undesirable result.

136 Herself partially excepted.

137 *WF*, p. 21; see also "White supremacy … does not refer to individual white people and their individual intentions or actions but to an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination"; "racism is a social system embedded in the culture and its institutions. We are born into this system and have no say in whether we will be affected by it"; "The ubiquitous socializing power of white supremacy cannot be avoided. The messages circulate 24-7 and have little or nothing to do with intentions, awareness, or agreement." To be sure, in the next breath she asserts that racism "must" simultaneously "be actively and passively, consciously and unconsciously, maintained." (*WF*, pp. 28, 64, 83, 129) Consistency is not DiAngelo's strong card.

138 *WF*, p. 138.

139 From the script:

All men are bastards.
What?
They're all potential rapists.
That's a bit sweeping.
All men have got the ability to rape.
Well they don't all do it, do they?
If they've got the ability, they've got the desire.
That's paranoid rubbish.
What do you know about paranoia?
Well, not half as much as you do, I'll give you that.
You'll find out when you get to America.
I'm only going on a holiday.
So?
What? You think I'm going to get yanked off the plane at J.F.K. airport and be raped and pillaged, do you?
You've got to be on your guard.
Did you hear what I just said?
What?
Yanked. Get it?
What?
Yanked, America.
Racist.

140 In homage to DiAngelo, I reversed the font color scheme to "interrupt" racism.

141 *WF*, p. 82—"Although deeper reflection won't free us of unconscious inequitable treatment of others, it will get us closer than will outright denial."

142 *WF*, p. 16.

143 *WF*, pp. 94-95.

144 DiAngelo asserts that in accusing white people of racism, she's "not saying that you are immoral." (*WF*, p. 13) But if racism emerged and persists to justify the enslavement and exploitation of Black people, and if every white person is implicated in this plunder, how could she not be accusing them of immorality?

145 *WF*, p. 113; see also p. 112—"White fragility functions as a form of bullying; I am going to make it so miserable for you to confront me—no matter how diplomatically you try to do so—that you will simply back off, give up, and never raise the issue again. White fragility keeps people of color in line and 'in their place.' In this way, it is a powerful form of white racial control."

146 *WF*, pp. 2, 14, 125.

147 *WF*, p. 125—"Racism is the norm rather than an aberration. Feedback is key to our ability to recognize and repair our inevitable and often unaware collusion."

148 *WF*, p. 66.

149 *WF*, pp. 57-58—"White solidarity is the unspoken agreement among whites to protect white advantage and not cause another white person to feel racial discomfort by confronting them when they say or do something racially problematic…. White solidarity requires both silence about anything that exposes the advantages of the white position and tacit agreement to remain racially united in the protection of white supremacy."

150 *WF*, p. 113.
151 *WF*, p. 135.
152 *WF*, pp. 144. Because "white identity is inherently racist; white people do not exist outside the system of white supremacy," DiAngelo also aspires "to be 'less white.'" (*WF*, pp. 149-50) Fortunately, she has earned enough royalties from *White Fragility* to take out a lifetime membership in White Self-Hate Tanning Salon (a.k.a. WHITE SHTS).
153 *WF*, p. 144.
154 *WF*, p. 127.
155 The reigning guru of "Whiteness Studies" is David Roediger. He heaped breathless praise on *White Fragility* in a *Los Angeles Times* review: "*White Fragility* fascinatingly reads as one-part jeremiad and one-part handbook … mordant … inspirational … keen perception … deep commitment … uncommonly honest … passionately committed" (6 September 2018). For this travesty alone, he and the whole "studies" should be promptly retired.
156 It might also be noticed that DiAngelo's English is an atrocity. For example, she speaks of "programs intended to ameliorate the most basic levels of discrimination," "a program was instituted to help ameliorate this discrimination," "reinscribing rather than ameliorating racism," "they should be focused on ameliorating racism," "ameliorating a white woman's distress," etc. (*WF*, pp. 30, 91, 132, 134, 137) Before teaching education, DiAngelo might consider first getting one.
157 *WF*, p. 8.
158 *WF*, p. 26.
159 *WF*, pp. 111, 132.
160 *WF*, p. 148.
161 *WF*, p. 14.
162 *WF*, p. 11.
163 *WF*, p. 90.
164 *WF*, p. 87.
165 Blancx?
166 *WF*, p. 152.
167 *WF*, pp. 63, 73.
168 *WF*, p. 110.
169 *WF*, p. 116.
170 *WF*, pp. 117, 123.
171 *WF*, p. 5.
172 *WF*, p. 47.
173 *WF*, pp. 3, 31-32, 135; see also p. 79—"Even an avowed white nationalist who would march openly in the streets chanting 'blood and soil!' can interact with people of color, and very likely does so," and p. 82—"How many white people who marched in the 1960s had authentic relationships with African-Americans?"
174 *WF*, p. 146.
175 *WF*, p. 131.
176 *WF*, p. 140.
177 *WF*, p. 152.

178 *WF*, pp. 43, 121.

179 *WF*, p. 151.

180 DiAngelo observes that "in a racist society, the desired direction is always toward whiteness and away from being perceived as a person of color." (*WF*, p. xvi) But as she and Dolezal illustrate, not "always."

181 *WF*, pp. 55, 58, 131, 136, 147.

182 *WF*, p. 12—"Over and over, I emphasized the importance of white people having racial humility and of not exempting ourselves from the unavoidable dynamics of racism."

183 *WF*, pp. 14, 82, 133.

184 *WF*, pp. 96-98.

185 *WF*, pp. 44, 62, 98.

186 *WF*, p. 46.

187 *WF*, p. 94.

188 *WF*, p. 27; see also. p. 22—"whites have the collective social and institutional power and privilege over people of color."

189 *WF*, p. 31. To secure her "progressive" bona fides, DiAngelo includes a few throw-away lines pointing up class inequities and the role of racism in dividing the working class.

190 New York: 2016. Hereafter: *SFB*.

191 Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: 2019). Hereafter: *HTB*.

192 It's cause for wonder, however, whether Kendi actually perused, e.g., volume 22 of *The Works of M. de Voltaire*, the original 2-volume 1776 edition of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, the 1861 edition of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* and the 1872 edition of Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, the *Minutes and Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Free People of Color in These United States* (1832), the *Milliard Fillmore Papers* (1907), or that he tracked down on his own references to periodicals such as *Richmond Recorder*, September 1, 1802, *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, no. 8 (1832), and *Weekly Anglo-African* (1861). In an abrupt change of register, the last quarter of *Stamped* is mostly a *tour d'horizon* of African-American popular culture crafted in the breathless prose of a teeny-bopper blog; for example,

> The Queens-born rapper Nas released 'One Love' … on his debut album, *Illmatic*, an instant classic, as revered that year—and in history—as 'Juicy,' the debut single of the Brooklyn-born Biggie Smalls. (*SFB*, p. 455)

193 It might also be noted that Kendi commits serial atrocities against the English language, which ought to—but in the current (anti-)cultural moment will assuredly not—compel the jury that presented him a National Book Award to hang its collective head in shame. The jury that presented Jeffrey C. Stewart a 2018 National Book Award for his indecipherable *The New Negro: The life of Alain Locke* should also be tarred and feathered. Unsurprisingly, Stewart gave Kendi's *How to Be* a gushing review in the woke *New York Times* ("another stunner … the most courageous book to date on the problem of race in the Western mind").

194 *SFB*, pp. 93 (Wheatley), 165-66 (Walker), 182, 195, 200, 232, and 251 (Douglass), 168, 184, and 229 (Garrison), 194 (Stowe), 242 (Sojourner Truth), 312, 328, and 342 (Du Bois), 342-43 and 366-67 (Frazier), 343 (Clarks), 345-47 (Wright), 352 (Franklin). *HTB*, pp. 10 ("one minute"), 144 ("more moments"). Frederick Douglass, "The Blessings of Liberty and

Education" (1894), in *The Essential Douglass: Selected writings and speeches* (Indianapolis: 2016), p. 358 (Garrison). David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of freedom* (New York: 2018), p. 247 (Stowe). Whereas Kendi heaps scorn on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a "tool for Stowe's racist abolitionism," Douglass judged it "a work of marvelous depth and power." (*SFB*, p. 194; Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, in *Autobiographies* (Library of America: 1994), edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., p. 726) Garrison did at first oppose extending the franchise immediately to the newly-freed slaves. Skeptical that, fresh out of slavery, they could exercise the suffrage responsibly, he advocated that its extension should await mutual accommodation with the white South as ex-slaves acquired wealth and status. But did that make him "like any racist"? (*SFB*, p. 229) On the other hand, Abolitionists such as Douglass, Wendell Phillips, Thaddeus Stevens, and Charles Sumner contended that the vote not only belonged to Blacks as of right but, additionally, in its absence Blacks couldn't gain practice in the political arts and, deprived of the suffrage, would be helpless before white Southern machinations to restore the status quo ante. Du Bois would in hindsight grant Garrison's "sound political argument"—i.e., under ideal conditions, according to Du Bois, Blacks should *not* have been granted suffrage at one fell swoop—but demurred at Garrison's "unsound economics," which wrongly assumed that Blacks, absent suffrage, would be left in peace to gradually prosper and would be weaned by Southern whites to democracy. (W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An essay toward a history of the part which Black people played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: 1970), p. 201; see also pp. 166, 606, 619-20. See also W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A social study* (New York: 2007), p. 257; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: 1989), pp. 27, 123-24) On Garrison's subsequent support of Black suffrage, Douglass generously reminisced:

> Garrison was not a man to lag far in the rear of truth and right, and he soon came to see with the rest of us that the ballot was essential to the freedom of the freedman. A man's head will not long remain wrong, when his heart is right.

The Abolitionists are all cut from the same racist cloth in Kendi-world: "Garrison and his band of assimilationists." Douglass, on the contrary, movingly recalled that

> I had hardly become a thinking being when I first learned to hate slavery, and hence I was no sooner free than I joined the *noble band of Abolitionists* in Massachusetts, headed by William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips (emphasis added).

In one of his last speeches, Douglass had this to say of those blind to or unmoved by the historic achievements of the Abolitionists:

> Antislavery men, against a storm of violence and persecution which would have appalled most men, educated the people of the North to believe that slavery was a crime; educated them up to the point of resistance to the slave power, and thus brought about the abolition of slavery. Yet the ignorant and stupid will ask, "What have Garrison, Gerrit Smith and others done for the colored people?" They see the colored man free; they see him riding on railways and steamboats, where they were never allowed to ride before; they see him going to school and crowding his way into the high places of the land, which twenty years ago would have been thought impossible to him, but they do not see by whose intelligence, courage and heroic endeavor these results have been accomplished. They are neutral from ignorance and stupidity. (Douglass, *Life and Times*, pp. 817, 941; see also Douglass, "It Moves, or the Philosophy of Reform" (1883), in *Essential Douglass*, pp.

291, 293, 299)

If those dismissive of the Abolitionists' legacy suffer from "ignorance and stupidity," what is to be said of a Kendi who would cavalierly malign them as racists? The white Abolitionists emerge in Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction* as towering protagonists in the postbellum drama. He hails Garrison's "indomitable courage," and the "magnificent figures" of Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens who "voluntarily laid down their lives on the altar of democracy." (Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 20, 186, 187, 191, 193, 266, 294, 296, 344, 591-94, 723) Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier is taken to task for depicting the postbellum Black family as dysfunctional. In the next breath, however, Kendi heaps praise on playwright Ntozake Shange (*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*) and author Alice Walker (*The Color Purple*), even as Shange and Walker both cast Black men in a less than flattering light; he also chides critics of Gangsta rap even as its lyrics demean Black women. If Kendi appears inconsistent, not to say downright hypocritical, that's because, according to him, "there has always been a razor-thin line between the racist portrayer of Black negativity and the antiracist portrayer of imperfect Black humanity." Lest the reader be unpersuaded, he also allows that it's a "complex distinction." (*SFB*, pp. 419-420, 452-53) The skeptical reader might conclude, however, that it's not complex at all: whoever and whatever burnishes his trendy brand, he deems them antiracist; whoever and whatever doesn't, he deems them racist.

195 During the ascent of fascism in Germany, the Communist Party labeled the Social Democrats as "social fascists"; in other words, that they didn't differ a jot from the Nazis. Leon Trotsky critically commented that, if "there exist certain very important *qualitative* differences,... then, do not call both of them fascists, because names in politics serve in order to differentiate and not in order to throw everything into the same heap." (Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (New York: 1971), p. 94; emphasis in original)

196 *SFB*, pp. 122 (Banneker), 196 (Delany), 324 and 347 (Hurston), 334 (Fetchit, *Amos 'n' Andy*), 327-28 (Vechten), 374, 384, 387, and 389 (Malcolm X), 382 (Baldwin), 381-496 passim (Angela Davis). Even as Kendi defends the Fetchit and *Amos 'n' Andy* roles, he deplores Shakespeare's depiction of "inferior Blackness and superior Whiteness" in *Othello*. (*SFB*, pp. 34-35) Were this true, it perplexes why Paul Robeson so coveted this role, performing it not once but on two separate occasions in his stage career. (His second performance, in 1943-44, is still the longest running Shakespeare play in the history of Broadway.) Did he relish depicting "inferior Blackness"—or did Robeson seek out the role in order (as he said) to portray a "Negro warrior" who "kills not in hate but in honor" so as to avenge the "destruction of himself as a human being, of his human dignity"? (Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: 1988), p. 274; for a scholarly interpretation of *Othello* echoing Robeson's, see Annette Rubinstein, *The Great Tradition in English Literature from Shakespeare to Shaw*, vol. I (New York: 1953), pp. 54-65; see also W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now: An essay in the history and sociology of the Negro race* (New York: 2007), p. 88) Du Bois, in the pages of *The Crisis*, lambasted Vechten's novel as "just one damned orgy after another with hate, hurt, gin and sadism." Ever politically correct in his effusions, Kendi lauds a book by Hurston as "one of the finest—if not *the* finest [of]—American

novels of all time," and Hurston herself as "the greatest antiracist novelist of the interwar era" (italics in original). How would he even know this? Judging by his prose, he couldn't have read many (any?) quality novels. In the meantime, he ranks Alex Haley's *Roots* "one of the most influential works of the twentieth century," books by bell hooks and Angela Davis, respectively, "instant classics," another book by Angela Davis "game-changing," a book by Michelle Alexander a "bombshell bestseller," and on and on. (*SFB*, pp. 422, 433, 470, 501) It's hard at times to make out whether he's writing history or promotional copy.

197 *SFB*, pp. 355-56 (Truman), 488-89 (N-word), 490 (Wright, Obama); David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A biography* (New York: 2009), pp. 682, 697. Wright had been Barack Obama's pastor.

198 *SFB*, pp. 88-89, 242, 246. Du Bois, who was a stringent critic of discriminatory labor syndicates, singled out for commendation the National Labor Union's "brave repudiation of color discrimination." (W. E. B. Du Bois, The *Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decades of its first century* (New York: 1968), p. 233; but compare Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 354-58, for a more restrained appreciation of the union)

199 He rapturously quotes from Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* this "impassioned love letter 'To All Black Women, from All Black Men'":

> Across the naked abyss of negated masculinity, of four hundred years minus my Balls, we face each other today, my Queen. I have Returned from the dead. (*SFB*, pp. 401-2)

If this ditty is why Cleaver came back, then it wasn't worth the trip—or his Balls.

200 *SFB*, pp. 355, 359 (Robeson), 413 (Grier), 421 (Derek), 485 (West).

201 *HTB*, p. 176; *SFB*, p. 361.

202 "We come then to the question presented: does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?"

203 Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The history of* Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's struggle for equality* (New York: 2004). The cases came from Delaware, South Carolina, Kansas, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The Delaware and District of Columbia cases presented some distinct considerations but they posed essentially the same constitutional question.

204 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro problem and modern democracy*, vol. 1 (New Brunswick, NJ: 1996), p. 339.

205 Was Bakke the loser that Kendi makes him out to be? Here's how one historian, not especially sympathetic to Bakke's litigation, described him:

> Bakke was never especially wealthy or advantaged. His was a storybook life of middle-class virtue. His father was a mailman, his mother a teacher. Bakke himself attended the University of Minnesota, majored in mechanical engineering, and earned just under a straight A average. To help finance his education, he joined the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps, then fought after graduation as a Marine captain in Vietnam. Upon returning to the States in 1967, he earned a masters degree at Stanford, and signed on as an aerospace engineer at a NASA research center near Palo Alto, California. "I don't know anyone brighter or more capable," his boss, David Engelbert, once said....
>
> But Bakke really wanted to become a doctor. So compelling was the urge, he wrote, that

while employed as an engineer, "I worked early mornings and also evenings at my job." Bakke later worked off hours as a hospital emergency room volunteer. He took "tough assignments, often working late with battered victims of car accidents or fights." In 1973, at thirty-three, he applied to a dozen medical schools. Every one turned him down. (J. Harvie Willkinson III, *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and school integration, 1954-1978* (New York: 1979), p. 254)

206 *SFB*, pp. 425-26. Bakke was rejected by other medical schools on account of his age. His first interviewer at U.C. Davis acknowledged that age was "the main hardship" in Bakke's application, but nonetheless went on to reckon him a "very desirable applicant and I shall so recommend him." The internal phrase quoted by Kendi ("present age") is lifted wildly out of context. It apparently came from a June 1973 letter to Bakke from a staff member in the U.C. Davis admissions office, which reads: "Your dilemma ... seems in your mind to center on your present age and the possible detrimental influence this factor may have in our consideration of your application." In regard to Bakke's second application, the U.S. Supreme Court opinion in *Bakke* stated: "His faculty interviewer was, by coincidence, the same Dr. Lowrey to whom he had written in protest of the special admissions program. Dr. Lowrey found Bakke 'rather limited in his approach' to the problems of the medical profession and found disturbing Bakke's 'very definite opinions which were based more on his personal viewpoints than upon a study of the total problem.' Dr. Lowrey gave Bakke the lowest of his six ratings, an 86 [out of 100]." (Each candidate was evaluated by six members on the admissions committee.)

207 *SFB*, pp. 385-86, 392, 416. It might be contended that the 1964 Act outlawed only intentional discrimination, whereas the Supreme Court interpreted it more broadly to encompass de facto discrimination. However, Kendi cites only one source, Michael K. Brown et al., *Whitewashing Race: The myth of a color-blind society* (Berkeley: 2003). This study explicitly argues that the Supreme Court's judgment in *Griggs* was consistent with the letter and spirit of the 1964 Act (see especially pp. 170-74).

208 Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American slavery* (New York: 2010), p. 320; *SFB*, pp. 230-31 (italics in original).

209 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: 2010), pp. 200-1; *SFB*, p. 437 (first quote); "Dr. Ibram X. Kendi—Albany State University" (30 November 2016; www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yzE5DM4gkg&t=1253s) (second quote).

210 Most of Kendi's terminology consists of partly appropriated, infelicitous coinages: Abolitionists spoke of "moral suasion," he rechristens it "uplift suasion"; Douglass spoke of "the slave power," he rechristens it "the racist power." Further, he declares "racist policy" a terminological improvement over "institutional racism" and "systemic racism": on the one hand, "racist policy" is "more tangible and exacting, and more likely to be immediately understood by people, including its victims, who may not have the benefit of extensive fluency in racial terms," while, on the other hand, the competing terms "are redundant. Racism itself is institutional, structural, and systemic." (*HTB*, pp. 18, 223) But it's hard to figure how "racist policy" can be precise if Kendi's definition of "racist" proves as elusive as quicksilver; while the point of such terms as "institutional" and "systemic" racism has been to distinguish racist acts that trace back to individual volition (e.g., a "hate" crime) from

those effectively racist acts built into the system, such as a higher Black incarceration rate due to longer mandated prison sentences for crack versus powder cocaine, or the inaccessibility of adequate counsel to mostly indigent young Blacks, or the targeting of young Blacks by the New York City police department's official "stop-and-frisk" policy.

211 Adolph Reed, *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the color line* (Oxford: 1999), chap. 7. Reed himself questions the centrality of this concept in Du Bois' oeuvre.

212 *HTB*, p. 29.

213 Among other novel insights, Kendi reports that, after Barack Obama's 2008 electoral victory, virulent white racists abruptly reversed themselves and tokenistically "adored" him. Did he not hear of the "birther movement"? He also reports that the Communist Party U.S.A. was, or should have been, a political force to reckon with in the 1980*s*. But by then, this fossil organization's ranks could have fit snugly into a phone booth, half were FBI informers while its most lively contingent fought the good fight in geriatric wards. *SFB*, pp. 80-81 (Enlightenment), 394 (minority), 483 (Obama), 409, 429-30, 434 (CPUSA).

214 *SFB*, p. 500.

215 *SFB*, pp. 506-7.

216 *HTB*, p. 202.

217 *HTB*, p. 17; see also p. 201.

218 Whereas *HTB* clocks in at 320 pages, entering *racis* (to cover *racist*, *antiracist*, *racism*, *antiracism*) in the book's search function yields an astonishing 1,304 results.

219 *Which Side Are You On?* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iAIM02kv0g):

> They say in Harlan County,
> There are no neutrals there.
> You'll either be a union man
> Or a thug for J. H. Blair.
> Which side are you on, boys,
> Which side are you on?
> ...

220 *HTB*, p. 53. To be sure, Kendi, who holds a PhD in African-American Studies from Temple University (bestowed upon him by Afrocentric guru Molefi Asante), does not shy away from weighing in on scientific matters such as evolutionary biology, sociobiology, and "the growth of molecular biology." (*SFB*, pp. 354, 431-32)

221 *HTB*, p. 38. At one point, Kendi seems to acknowledge phenotypical racial differences: "Dark people—the unidentified racial group of darker skins, kinky hair, broader noses and lips—span many races, ethnicities, and nationalities." (ibid, pp. 109-10) What "unidentified" denotes, how a "racial group" can "span many races"—it's anyone's guess.

222 *HTB*, p. 230, see also pp. 42, 129; *SFB*, pp. 9-10, 147. Although Kendi is emphatic that the core of racism is "not racist ideas" but, on the contrary, economic self-interest, it doesn't prevent him from praising a former Abolitionist as he "recognized racist ideas as the core of" opposition to Reconstruction. (*SFB*, p. 256)

223 *SFB*, p. 504; *HTB*, p. 129.

224 The obvious exceptions are "sellouts," "Uncle Toms," et al., but those aren't the iconic African-American figures chronicled by Kendi in his history.

225 *HTB*, pp. 139-140. On a related note, Kendi states that "clearly, a large percentage of Black people hold anti-Black racist ideas." But he then goes on to observe that "every time I say something is wrong with Black people,… I am being a racist" (ibid.; see also p. 7, "to say something is wrong about a racial group is to say something is inferior about that racial group"). It would appear that he himself has come perilously close to being a racist.

226 *HTB*, pp. 37-38; see also p. 55.

227 See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Antisemite and Jew*:

> Whatever he does, his course has been set for him. He can choose to be courageous or cowardly, sad or gay; he can choose to kill Christians or to love them; but he cannot choose not to be a Jew. Or, rather, if he does so choose, if he declares that Jews do not exist, if he denies with violence and desperation the Jewish character in himself, it is precisely in this that he is a Jew.

228 See Sartre, *Antisemite*:

> The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew.... It is the antisemite who *makes* the Jew. (italics in original)

229 *HTB*, p. 55.

230 *SFB*, p. 5; *HTB*, pp. 9, 20.

231 *HTB*, pp. 13, 20.

232 *SFB*, pp. 1-2.

233 One can, of course, point to relatively trivial exceptions—e.g., the underrepresentation of Asians in the National Basketball Association probably in part owes to the "inferior" height of Asians.

234 I am using this term in the nonscientific, colloquial sense of a group of people with discernible physical features tracing back to the continent of origin.

235 Racial disparities, according to Kendi, perforce stem from racism:

> One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racist inequities, as an antiracist;
>
> There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups;
>
> Racial inequity is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing. Here's an example of racial inequity: 71 percent of White families lived in owner-occupied homes in 2014, compared to 45 percent of Latinx families and 41 percent of Black families. Racial equity is when two or more racial groups are standing on a relatively equal footing. An example of racial equity would be if there were relatively equitable [sic] percentages of all three racial groups living in owner occupied homes;
>
> A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups;
>
> Racial inequity is the signpost of racist policy.
>
> (*HTB*, pp. 9, 18, 234; see also *SFB*, pp. 1-2, 416)

236 It might be argued that Black professional basketball players *are* super-exploited. But so then are their white teammates. It has nothing to do with race.

237 Here's a sample of other Quotations from Chairman Kendi on race and racism:

> *The word "racism" went out of fashion in the liberal haze of racial progress—Obama's political brand—and conservatives started to treat racism as the equivalent of the N-word, a vicious*

pejorative rather than a descriptive term. (Can he really be saying that conservatives only resented the "racist" label after Obama was elected?)

An ethnic racist asks, Why are Black immigrants doing better than African Americans? An ethnic antiracist asks, Why are Black immigrants not doing as well as other immigrant groups? (Can he really be saying that if you ask *both* questions, you are still a racist?)

(*HTB*, pp. 46, 49, 67)

238 *HTB*, pp. 13, 20, 44, 180.

239 *HTB*, p. 182.

240 *HTB*, pp. 18, 218 (emphasis added).

241 *HTB*, p. 19.

242 The N.B.A. is 80 percent Black, 18 percent white, and 0.2 percent Asian, while the U.S. population is 13 percent Black, 60 percent white, and 6 percent Asian.

243 *SFB*, pp. 10, 11, 237; for other references to racial disparities, see pp. 82, 239, 266, 313, 360, 385-86, 432, 449, 458, 507, 509.

244 Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 156. For a rigorous critique of racial "disparitarian" discourse, see Adolph Reed, Jr. and Touré F. Reed, "The Evolution of 'Race' & Racial Justice under Neoliberalism," *Socialist Register* (2022), especially p. 14:

> Race-reductionist politics depends on an alchemy that turns economic inequality into group disparities, and presents "inclusion" or representation in "groupist" terms as an alternative to redistribution. That is, it takes the inequality produced by capitalism as legitimate and considers injustice only as the relative inability of members of pertinent ascriptively-defined groups to participate fully in the dominant regime of exploitation.

245 *HTB*, pp. 101-3; *SFB*, pp. 469, 479, 480, 486.

246 I hypothesize this solution to consider every possibility, although Kendi himself would clearly oppose it: having been designed to exclude and degrade non-whites, standardized tests, in his opinion, don't measure anything meaningful.

247 *HTB*, p. 107.

248 *HTB*, p. 103. As a long term solution, Kendi recommends equalizing appropriations to schools in poor districts. But, according to him, the "disparity in academic performance" would nonetheless persist as standardized tests are inherently racist. Further, even if test performance did equalize across races in some indeterminate future, his solution doesn't practically address the "how" of his goal to abolish racial disparities in the here and now. It might also be noticed that increased funding of schools in poor communities can hardly be called a radical, distinctive, or innovative policy proposal—indeed, it is the very same recommendation advanced by white "assimilationists" that he anathematizes as racist.

249 Herewith a sample of Kendi's insights into this intersectional racism:

> Racist (and sexist) power distinguishes race-genders, racial (or gender) groups at the intersection of race and gender. Women are a gender. Black people are a race. When we identify Black women, we are identifying a race-gender. A sexist policy produces inequities between women and men. A racist policy produces inequities between racial groups. When a policy produces inequities between race-genders, it is gendered racism, or gender racism for short. To be antiracist is to reject not only the hierarchy of races but of race-genders. To be feminist is to reject not only the hierarchy of genders but of race-genders. To truly be antiracist is to be feminist. To truly be feminist is to be antiracist. To be antiracist (and feminist) is to level the different race-genders, is to root the inequities

between the equal race-genders in the policies of gender racism. (*HTB*, pp. 188-89)

> Male resistance to Black feminism and intersectional theory has been … self-destructive, preventing resisters from understanding our specific oppression. The intersection of racism and sexism … oppresses men of color. Black men reinforce oppressive tropes by reinforcing certain sexist ideas. For example, sexist notions of "real men" as strong and racist notions of Black men as not really men intersect to produce the gender racism of the weak Black man, inferior to the pinnacle of manhood, the strong White man. (*HTB*, p. 190)
>
> Intersectional theory now gives all of humanity the ability to understand the intersectional oppression of their identities, from poor Latinx to Black men to White women to Native lesbians to transgender Asians. A theory for Black women is a theory for humanity. (*HTB*, p. 191)
>
> Queer antiracism is equating all the race-sexualities, striving to eliminate the inequities between the race-sexualities. We cannot be antiracist if we are homophobic or transphobic. (*HTB*, p. 197)

It would take more than a Rosetta Stone to decipher this gunk. Incidentally, one might pause to wonder, in an era that has stigmatized young Black males as "superpredators," whether they currently suffer from the "oppressive trope" of an effeminate "weak Black man"; and by what earthly calculus do "Black men" and "White women" suffer from *intersectional* oppression—are *men* and *whites* now oppressed groups?

250 *HTB*, p. 14.

251 *HTB*, p. 15.

252 Sartre, *Antisemite*.

253 *HTB*, p. 31.

254 *HTB*, p. 24

255 *HTB*, p. 29; *SFB*, pp. 4-5.

256 *HTB*, p. 24.

257 *HTB*, p. 29; *SFB*, p. 293.

258 *HTB*, pp. 82-87, 166. The two main "authorities" Kendi credits for these musings are Wade Nobles and Molefi Kete Asante. Of Nobles and Asante, charity recalls the admonition, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything."

259 *HTB*, pp. 87, 166, 173; see also *SFB*, pp. 471-72.

260 It also baffles why Kendi so fervently supports affirmative action: How could Black students at Harvard Medical School possibly comprehend professors and subject matter anchored in an alien "deep structure"?

261 *HTB*, pp. 235, 236.

262 *HTB*, pp. 53, 90, 94, 95, 105.

263 *SFB*, pp. 376, 390.

264 *HTB*, pp. 31, 84, 91; *SFB*, pp. 11, 308-9.

265 Orville Vernon Burton and Armand Derfner, *Justice Deferred: Race and the Supreme Court* (Cambridge: 2021), p. 12. Douglass originally adhered to this damning verdict but later proclaimed—unpersuasively, it must be said, even as it was politically astute—that the Constitution was an antislavery "GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT."

266 When the Supreme Court overturned *Hardwick* in *Lawrence* (2003), finding a constitutionally protected right to commit same-sex sodomy, the Court's leading

conservative justice, Scalia, registered a dissent on the grounds that the majority exceeded its authority as it ignored cultural norms: "Countless judicial decisions and legislative enactments have relied on the ancient proposition that a governing majority's belief that certain sexual behavior is 'immoral and unacceptable' constitutes a rational basis for regulation."

267 *HTB*, p. 31.

268 *HTB*, pp. 36, 83-84, 101-3, 202; *SFB*, p. 456 It might also be queried why this antiracist crusader took the flagrantly assimilationist route of enrolling in a pricey GRE preparatory course. (*HTB*, p. 100) Shouldn't he have campaigned for the exam to be administered in Ebonics?

269 In another iteration, Kendi alleges that

> the "dangerous *Black* neighborhood" conception is based on racist ideas, not reality. There is such a thing as a dangerous "unemployed neighborhood," however.

But can't both statements be true: if the Black neighborhood is crime-ridden, that's because of pervasive Black unemployment? In fact, he himself immediately goes on to say that "*certain* violent crime rates were higher in Black neighborhoods simply because unemployed people were concentrated in Black neighborhoods." Oddly, he applauds hip-hop performer Sister Souljah's quip after the 1992 L.A. riots: "If black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people?" (The civil disorder erupted after the acquittal of Rodney King's assailants.) But per Kendi, isn't Sister Souljah's "conception" of "black people killing black people every day" grounded in "racist ideas, not reality"? He further asserts that violent petty crime in Black neighborhoods pales beside the high roller white-collar crime perpetrated by residents of upscale white communities. Emphatically so: a Woody Guthrie lyric famously went, "Some will rob you with a six-gun, / And some with a fountain pen." Still, isn't this cold comfort to those daily trapped amidst bloody drug shootouts? Incidentally, it's hard not to conclude from reading Kendi that African-Americans suffer from an array of racist delusions. Thus, he also chides Black attendees at the Million Man March for "believing the racist idea that something was wrong with Black men and Black teens and Black boys and Black fathers and Black husbands." In another weird outburst, Kendi castigates "racist Blacks [who] blamed *Black* politicians—and increasingly *Black* capitalists—for their socioeconomic struggles." But he himself is at pains to point out that some Black people *do* command power and *do* utilize it to oppress other Blacks: "When someone says Black people can't be racist because Black people don't have 'institutional power,' they are flouting reality." *HTB*, pp. 141 ("flouting"), 148 ("engulfed"), 163 ("alive"), 168 ("most dangerous"); *SFB*, pp. 425 ("capitalists"), 436-37 (misleading crime statistics, "unemployed"), 451 ("Souljah"), 464 ("Million"). All emphases in original.

270 *HTB*, pp. 96 ("cripple"), 104-5 ("behaviorally wrong," "mind oppresses"); *SFB*, pp. 98 ("vices," "inferior," "illogically," "different"), 183, 184 (Garrison), 232 ("skipping"), 271, 352, 492. But compare *SFB*, p. 164, where Kendi seems to praise Garrison for asserting that, even as slavery reduced Blacks to "brutes," freedom and education would "elevate [Blacks] to a proper rank in the scale of being." If their white masters accused slaves of theft, that, too, is said to be racist. (*SFB*, p. 69) But it would be most surprising—and disappointing!—if slaves didn't exploit every occasion to expropriate their expropriators. "There was in the slave

home necessarily almost an entire lack of thrift or the ordinary incentives to thrift," Du Bois observed.

> The food and fuel were certain, and extra faithfulness [frugalness?] or saving could make little or no difference. On the other hand, cunning and thieving could secure many a forbidden knick-knack, far more than honest cultivation of the little garden spot which each family had. The thriftiest slave could only look forward to slavery for himself and children. (W. E. B. Du Bois (ed.), *The Negro American Family* (Atlanta: 1908), p. 49)

271 To be sure, after the Civil War, Douglass also celebrated that despite the odds stacked against them—economic destitution, white animus, "two hundred years heavy with human bondage," "their ignorance"—the freedmen managed to register enormous progress. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), in *Autobiographies* (Library of Congress: 1994), p. 24 ("dehumanizing"); Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), in *Autobiographies* (Library of Congress: 1994), pp. 142 ("obliterating," emphasis in original), 184 ("soul-crushing"); "Letter to My Old Master" (1848), in *Essential Douglass*, pp. 30-31 ("transition"), 31 ("broken spirit"); "Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered" (1854), in *Essential Douglass*, pp. 88-89 ("ten thousand"); "Substance of a Lecture [on Secession and the Civil War]" (1861), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 160 ("brute"); "Remarks of Frederick Douglass [on the Emancipation Proclamation]" (1863), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 185 ("blotted"); "The Nation's Problem" (1889), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 327 ("enforced"); "Extract from a Speech on the East India Emancipation" (1881), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 255 ("ignorance"); "Self-Made Man," in *Essential Douglass*, p. 341 ("two hundred years"); "The Blessings of Liberty and Education" (1894), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 356 ("mental and moral," "degradation").

272 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 9-10. Du Bois presents a surprisingly nuanced juxtaposition of the slave's plight versus that of his contemporary free laborer. He notes, for example, the economic "amenities" of that peculiar institution—the slave is "protected by a certain primitive sort of old-age pension, job insurance, and sickness insurance." Still, he concludes that "Negro slaves in America represented the worst and lowest conditions among modern laborers"; in particular, they suffered "absolute subjection to the individual will of an owner," and the "cruelty and injustice" that ineluctably attended such subjection.

273 Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here* (Boston: 2010), p. 39.

274 *HTB*, pp. 8 ("ensnare"), 152-55 ("invent," "stereotype," Clark). Whenever Kendi dismisses a counter-proposition as devoid of evidence, it invariably signals his own evidentiary lacuna.

275 *HTB*, pp. 33-34.

276 David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A biography* (New York: 2009), p. 74. Although Du Bois wouldn't have denoted it toil. At his 90th birthday celebration, Du Bois, turning to his great-grandson, reflected:

> You will find it the fashion in the America where eventually you will live and work to judge that life's work by the amount of money it brings you. This is a grave mistake. The return from your work must be the satisfaction which that work brings you and the world's need of that work. With this, life is heaven, or as near heaven as you can get. Without this—with work which you despise, which bores you and which the world does not need—this life is hell. (W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A*

soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decade of its first century (New York: 1968), p. 398)

277 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An essay toward an autobiography of a race concept* (New York: 2007); p. 50. Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 165.

278 Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 159.

279 He could also be irascible. He tells the story of when "the student leader of a prayer meeting into which I had wandered casually to look local religion over, suddenly and without warning announced that 'Professor Du Bois would lead us in prayer,' I simply answered, 'No, he won't,' and as a result nearly lost my job." (Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 29)

280 Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 283.

281 If, as his biographer, David Garrow, reports, Barack Obama has always preferred the company of whites, it's in part because the faux-fawning Martha's Vineyard crowd, as if in chorus, acclaim him "brilliant," even as they don't for a moment believe it (except on a *Black* measuring rod…), and which, if one is situated outside the woke bubble, it's painfully obvious he isn't, so bestowing this praise doesn't threaten their über self-image while it boosts their woke credentials. On the other hand, if our First President Passing as Black *is* wont to believe in his surpassing genius, and to believe that his white interlocutors believe it, it's because he imagines himself to be a cut above *those* Black people, although it might be supposed that an ephemeral moment of self-doubt occasionally creeps in and self-possession takes hold when it dawns that he's just another Black prop in a self-aggrandizing woke extravaganza. It could not be said of Du Bois that he trucked in "Black Pride," but it's also the case that he never evinced shame at being Black. He un-self-consciously spoke of "my people" and "my race," the words rolled off his tongue, whereas, except as verbal gimmick, Obama was hard put to so define his collective of belonging, if only because the notion came so unnaturally to him. In his presidential memoir, he but fleetingly alludes to "the Black community—my community," and being an "African-American" beyond the formal classification. (Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: 2020), pp. 63, 141, 448) On these points, see Chapter 6 below.

282 In the twilight of his life, Du Bois was happily astonished to learn that he was being taught in a class at University of California, Berkeley. (Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, p. 694)

283 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: 1989), p. 61. See also his stirring call for "The Study of the Negro Problems" that is based on "scientific truth" and serves "the high end of truth-seeking" (excerpted in Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, pp. 138-39).

284 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An essay toward a history of the part which Black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: 1970), pp. 409-29 ("financial graft" at p. 411), 475-77, 493-94, 509-10, 518-23, 531, 546, 598-600, 610-618, 622, 662.

285 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 617-618.

286 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 425, 476, 610-11, 616.

287 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 423.

288 In a long bibliographical essay, Du Bois notes that "I have depended very largely upon secondary material; upon state histories of Reconstruction, written in the main by those who were convinced before they began to write that the Negro was incapable of government, or of becoming a constituent of a civilized state." (*Black Reconstruction*, p. 724)

289 Part IV of *SFB* is said to be organized around Du Bois' life and work.

290 *SFB*, p. 271; *HTB*, p. 29.

291 *SFB*, p. 7.

292 Of his first hesitant steps into the world of scholarly inquiry, Du Bois writes in his *Autobiography*: "I began to conceive of the world as a continuing growth rather than a finished product" (p. 205). It was an apropos description not just of his subject matter but also of his own intellectual odyssey.

293 Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Radical King*, edited and introduced by Cornel West (Boston: 2015), p. 118.

294 *SFB*, p. 283; but compare pp. 291-93, where Kendi describes Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* (published after *Philadelphia Negro*) as contaminated by the "racist idea" that "racial groups were not equal," p. 335, where he places the cut-off date at "1933" when "Du Bois had almost completely turned to anti-racism," and p. 342, where he points to the "holdover" of Du Bois' "assimilationist ideas" in 1939.

295 I will look at this representative sample: W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A social study* (1899; Oxford: 2007); W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903; New York: 1989); W. E. B. Du Bois (ed.), *The Negro American Family* (Atlanta: 1908); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935; New York: 1970); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now: An essay in the history and sociology of the Negro race* (1939; New York: 2007); W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dawn of Dusk: An essay toward an autobiography of a race concept* (1940; New York: 2007).

296 Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p. 1. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 59.

297 See Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p. 85:

> A review of intelligence tests in the United States shows that ... the tests used have been standardized upon whites in the northern part of the United States while most of the Negroes measured have been from the South where Negro slavery disappeared only two generations ago. The sampling has been faulty either because the groups have been too small or unlike in social status, school training and cultural background.

298 See Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p. 86:

> The average social scientist today is born with so firm and unconscious a belief in the inferiority of darker races that unbiased investigation is difficult. Take for instance the study of recruits in the American army during the World War. A larger proportion of Negroes in the South were found fit for service in the army than of whites; and at the same time they were found of inferior mental ability. But the first conclusion was certainly influenced by a desire to send Negroes to the front and a reluctance of white men to go; while the second conclusion was influenced by the desire to keep Negroes from being selected as officers or even put into the fighting ranks but rather relegated as largely as possible to the regiments of stevedores.

299 See Du Bois, *Black Folk*, pp. 85-86:

> The fundamental and logical difficulty with all racial comparison is that there is no way of determining just what a race is; how far the characteristics of a given group are inherited; how far they are due to social and physical environment and what biological mixtures have taken place.... It is impossible ... to answer the question as to how far genius or unusual ability has appeared in the Negro race, until we are able to determine scientifically just what a "Negro" is, and to prove historically in what degree particular examples of

genius belonged to this race.

300 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 50.

301 Even as Du Bois dismisses the evidence alleging genetic Negro inferiority, still, in a typically astute aside, he does allow for an hereditary component to intelligence and talent generally. See *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 51-52:

> America indeed has meant the breaking down of class bars which imprisoned personalities and capabilities and allowing new men and new families to emerge. This is not, as some people assume, a denial of the importance of heredity and family. It is rather its confirmation. It shows us that the few in the past who have emerged are not necessarily the best; and quite certainly are not the only ones worthy of development and distinction; that, on the contrary, only a comparatively few have, under our present economic and social organization, had a chance to show their capabilities.

In other words, the more protective class barriers disappeared, the more those possessing natural gifts would emerge from obscurity while those possessing privilege but not gifts would fall into obscurity.

302 Du Bois, *Black Folk,* p. 1.

303 Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p. 84.

304 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 2, 111.

305 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 2, 65; Du Bois, *Black Folk*, pp. 84-85; Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 39.

306 In his earliest musings on racism such as *Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois discounted the capitalists' super-profits that sprang from it, and instead homed in on the competition between Blacks and whites for scarce better-paying jobs. In his later, quasi-Marxist phase such as *Black Reconstruction* and *Black Folk*, Du Bois also ascribed the rivalry between white and Negro workers to capitalists' machinations, as they secured their hegemony and super-profits by "throwing white and black laborers, so far as possible, into competing economic groups and making each feel that the one was the cause of the other's troubles." To be sure, he also observed that white workers did materially benefit as a small fraction of capitalist super-profits trickled down to them. (Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, pp. 88-89; Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 18-22, 28, 103, 535, 680; Du Bois, *Black Folk*, pp. 153, 264)

307 "It must be remembered," Du Bois further elucidates,

> that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them. White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule…. One can see for these reasons why labor organizers and labor agitators made such small headway in the South. They were, for the most part, appealing to laborers who would rather have low wages upon which they could eke out an existence than see colored labor with a decent wage.

(Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 700-1; see also ibid., pp. 12, 80-81, 130-31, 347, 349-50, 680, and Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 103, 104)

308 Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p. 153; Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 2. It was one such lynching of a Black man and the irrational aspect of racism it exposed, alongside the broad public indifference to the Negro question, that would cause Du Bois to recalibrate his professional modus operandi:

> Two considerations thereafter broke in upon my work and eventually disrupted it: first, one could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved; and secondly, there was no such definite demand for scientific work of the sort that I was doing as I had confidently assumed would be easily forthcoming. I regarded it as axiomatic that the world wanted to learn the truth and if the truth was sought with even approximate accuracy and painstaking devotion, the world would gladly support the effort. This was, of course, but a young man's idealism, not by any means false, but also never universally true. (Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 222)

309 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 103, 148; see also ibid., p. 111, and especially ibid, pp. 86-87, 98:

> The individual may act consciously and rationally and be responsible for what he does; but on the other hand many of his actions, and indeed, as we are coming to believe, most of his actions, are not rational and many of them arise from subconscious urges. It is our duty to assess praise and blame for the rational and conscious acts of men, but to regard the vast area of the subconscious and the irrational and especially of habit and convention which also produce significant action, as an area where we must apply other remedies and judgments if we would get justice and right to prevail in the world. Above all we must survey these vague and uncharted lands and measure their limits. Looking at this whole matter of the white race as it confronts the world today, what can be done to make its attitudes rational and consistent and calculated to advance the best interests of the whole world of men? The first point of attack is undoubtedly the economic. The progress of the white world must cease to rest upon the poverty and the ignorance of its own proletariat and of the colored world. Thus industrial imperialism must lose its reason for being and in that way alone can the great racial groups of the world come into normal and helpful relation to each other. The present attitude and action of the white world is not based solely upon rational, deliberate intent. It is a matter of conditioned reflexes; of long followed habits, customs and folkways; of subconscious trains of reasoning and unconscious nervous reflexes. To attack and better all this calls for more than appeal and argument. It needs carefully planned and scientific propaganda; the vision of a world of intelligent men with sufficient income to live decently and with the will to build a beautiful world.
>
> ...
>
> There are two assumptions … which are not quite true; and that is the assumption on one hand that most race prejudice is a matter of ignorance to be cured by information; and on the other hand that much discrimination is a matter of deliberate deviltry and unwillingness to be just. Admitting widespread ignorance concerning the guilt of American whites for the plight of the Negroes; and the undoubted existence of sheer malevolence, the present attitude of the whites is much more the result of inherited customs and of those irrational and partly subconscious actions of men which control so large a proportion of their deeds. Attitudes and habits thus built up cannot be changed by sudden assault. They call for a long, patient, well-planned and persistent campaign of propaganda. Moreover, until such a campaign has had a chance to do its work, the

minority which is seeking emancipation must remember that they are facing a powerful majority. There is no way in which the American Negro can force this nation to treat him as equal until the unconscious cerebration and folkways of the nation, as well as its rational deliberate thought among the majority of whites, are willing to grant equality. In the meantime of course the agitating group may resort to a campaign of countermoves. They may organize and collect resources and by every available means teach the white majority and appeal to their sense of justice; but at the very best this means a campaign of waiting and the colored group must be financially able to afford to wait and patient to endure without spiritual retrogression while they wait.

310 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 59.

311 Du Bois, *Black Folk*, pp. 81-83.

312 See Du Bois, *Black Folk*, pp. 78-79, 83:

There can be no question as to the outcropping of cruelty and oppression in Africa. Slavery was widespread in Africa and domestic slavery still persists to some extent. Whether or not slavery was more common in Africa than elsewhere cannot be stated dogmatically and may be doubted; but it certainly was common and widespread. The slave trade which supplied domestic slaves was an outcome of intertribal wars, until a foreign demand arose which raised an unusual economic problem and led to stupendous results…. Out of fetish and witchcraft, out of pestilence, conquest and political change grew, especially in the jungle and the fever coast of West Africa, many terrible customs: human sacrifice, in some cases and times on a large scale; witch-hunting, cannibalism and cruel punishments. Compared with European and Asiatic civilization these occurrences are not altogether unusual. "It has been estimated that in England between 1170 and 1783 at least 50,000 persons suffered death at Tyburn alone. English criminals during that time were branded, hanged, drawn and quartered and burned alive." Nevertheless the persistence of these customs in some parts of Africa and especially often among otherwise gifted and progressive folk, argues for some special reasons. The widespread system of human sacrifice on the West Coast of Africa was an arresting and sinister phenomenon. It was not, however, deliberate cruelty, but part of an age-old belief in the spirit world and the eternity of royal power. It provided the king after death not only with wives but servants in the spirit world, and renewed these servants from time to time. With this also went appeasement of evil spirits and punishment of crime…. It may be that the difficult fight which man in certain areas of Africa has had for physical survival against disease, the fear of wild beast and wilder men, the gloom of the jungle, made human sacrifice and cannibalism a more lasting phenomenon than in cases of most other peoples.

...

Even when we contemplate such revolting survivals of savagery as cannibalism, we cannot jump too quickly at conclusions. Cannibalism is spread over many parts of Negro Africa, yet the very tribes who practice cannibalism show often other traits of industry and power.

313 Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, p. 41; Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p. 84; Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 63, 64. Although such observations might be dismissed as—albeit positive—racial stereotyping, it nonetheless remained, as Du Bois notes, that "ceremony and courtesy mark Negro life in Africa." Before him, Frederick Douglass, too, observed of Southern slaves that, "among a people so uncultivated, and with so many stern trials to look in the face, there is not to be found, among any people, a more rigid enforcement of the law of respect to elders, than they maintain. I set this down as partly constitutional with my race, and

partly conventional. There is no better material in the world for making a gentleman than is furnished in the African." (Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: 1855), in *Autobiographies* (Library of Congress: 1994), p. 164)

314 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 88-89, 91.

315 Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, p. 69; see also pp. 78, 193, and Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 40. Du Bois also ascribes Negro poverty to profligate habits of consumption traceable to slavery; see Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, pp. 127-28:

> Probably few poor nations waste more money by thoughtless and unreasonable expenditure than the American Negro…. First, they waste much money in poor food and in unhealthful methods of cooking. The meat bill of the average Negro family would surprise a French or German peasant or even an Englishman. The crowds that line Lombard street on Sundays are dressed far beyond their means; much money is wasted in extravagantly furnished parlors, dining-rooms, guest chambers and other visible parts of the homes. Thousands of dollars are annually wasted in excessive rents, in doubtful "societies" of all kinds and descriptions, in amusements of various kinds, and in miscellaneous ornaments and gewgaws. All this is a natural heritage of a slave system, but it is not the less a matter of serious import to a people in such economic stress as Negroes now are. The Negro has much to learn of the Jew and Italian, as to living within his means and saving every penny from excessive and wasteful expenditures. (see also p. 130, where he ascribes low Negro homeownership in part to misguided personal budgetary allocations)

316 Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, p. 70; see also pp. 78, 88-90, 231-240. Du Bois also attributes the Negro's lackluster job performance to this absence of prospects for job promotion. (ibid., pp. 91-92) In addition, he traced back the Negro community's "woefully deficient" health and hygiene, its substandard housing and excessively high rents, and its lack of social organization to a varying and symbiotic combination of slavery's legacy, poverty, color prejudice, and personal profligacy and ignorance. (ibid., pp. 114-116, 154, 161, 211, 240-41)

317 Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, pp. 169-70, 175-76; see also pp. 168, 171, and Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 92.

318 Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, pp. 46, 95, 169, 171, 174, 183, 197, 202-4.

319 Du Bois, *Philadelphia*, pp. 202-3, 242-43. In the book's concluding passage titled "The Duty of the Negroes," Du Bois expresses understanding of Negro crime, but not to the point of its extenuation. In other words, and contrary to the French aphorism, *comprendre, c'est excuser*, he explicates without making excuses. The Negroes' duty, Du Bois counsels,

> should first be directed toward a lessening of Negro crime; no doubt the amount of crime imputed to the race is exaggerated, no doubt features of the Negro's environment over which he has no control, excuse much that is committed; but beyond all this the amount of crime that can without doubt rightly be laid at the door of the Philadelphia Negro is large and is a menace to a civilized people. Efforts to stop this crime must commence in the Negro homes; they must cease to be, as they often are, breeders of idleness and extravagance and complaint. Work, continuous and intensive; work, although it be menial and poorly rewarded; work, though done in travail of soul and sweat of brow, must be so impressed upon Negro children as the road to salvation, that a child would feel it a greater disgrace to be idle than to do the humblest labor. The homely virtues of

honesty, truth and chastity must be instilled in the cradle, and although it is hard to teach self-respect to a people whose million fellow-citizens half-despise them, yet it must be taught as the surest road to gain the respect of others. (ibid., p. 271)

On the other hand, while he expresses understanding of why white people balk at socializing with the degraded Negro race, Du Bois unsparingly recalls that white people's racism is the *fons et origo* of the Negro's degradation and thus it cannot excuse their racism:

A natural repugnance to close intermingling with unfortunate ex-slaves has descended to a discrimination that very seriously hinders them from being anything better. It is right and proper to object to ignorance and consequently to ignorant men; but if by our actions we have been responsible for their ignorance and are still actively engaged in keeping them ignorant, the argument loses its moral force. So with the Negroes: men have a right to object to a race so poor and ignorant and inefficient as the mass of the Negroes; but if their policy in the past is parent of much of this condition, and if to-day by shutting black boys and girls out of most avenues of decent employment they are increasing pauperism and vice, then they must hold themselves largely responsible for the deplorable results. (ibid., p. 273)

320 This passage on post-Emancipation introduces Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk*:

For the first time he sought to analyze the burden he bore upon his back, that dead-weight of social degradation partially masked behind a half-named Negro problem. He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance,—not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities; the accumulated sloth and shirking and awkwardness of decades and centuries shackled his hands and feet. (*Souls*, p. 6)

Bucking then-conventional wisdom, even as he acknowledges an element of truth in it, Du Bois enters this caveat on the Negro work ethic:

These black thousands are not in reality lazy; they are improvident and careless; they insist on breaking the monotony of toil with a glimpse at the great town-world on Saturday; they have their loafers and their rascals; but the great mass of them work continuously and faithfully for a return, and under circumstances that would call forth equal voluntary effort from few if any other modern laboring class. (ibid., p. 100; see also pp. 104-13, 117-21; of the sensible increase in "Negro crime" in the late 19th century, see pp. 124-26)

321 See Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 92-93, 102-3:

Above all the Negro is poor: poor by heritage from two hundred forty-four years of chattel slavery, by emancipation without land or capital and by seventy-five years of additional wage exploitation and crime peonage…. This social degradation is intensified and emphasized by discrimination; inability to get work, discrimination in pay, improbability of promotion, and more fundamentally, spiritual segregation from contact with manners, customs, incentives to effort despite handicaps…. This means that Negroes live in districts of low cultural level; that their contacts with their fellow men involve contacts with people largely untrained and ignorant, frequently diseased, dirty, and noisy, and sometimes anti-social. These districts are not usually protected by the police—rather victimized and tyrannized over by them. No one who does not know can realize what tyranny a low-grade white policeman can exercise in a colored neighborhood. In court his unsupported word cannot be disputed and the only defense against him is often mayhem

and assassination by black criminals, with resultant hue and cry. City services of water, sewerage, garbage-removal, street-cleaning, lighting, noise and traffic regulation, schools and hospitalization are usually neglected or withheld. Saloons, brothels, and gambling seek these areas with open or tacit consent.

...

Obsessed by the undoubted fact that crime is increased and magnified by race prejudice, we ignore the other fact that we have crime and a great deal of it and that we ourselves have got to do something about it; what we ought to do is to cover the Negro group with the services of legal defense organizations in order to counteract the injustice of the police and of the magistrate courts; and then we need positive organized effort to reclaim young and incipient malefactors.

322 Du Bois, *Philadelphia*, pp. 45-49, 119, 134-36.

323 See, e.g., Du Bois, *Souls*, pp. 98-99.

324 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro American Family: A social study made by Atlanta University under the patronage of the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund* (Atlanta: 1908), pp. 31, 48-49, 51-54, 60, 128, 129.

325 Ibid., pp. 37-38, 41-42, 46, 129-30. Of slavery's deleterious impact on Negro sexuality, Du Bois writes:

He is more primitive, less civilized, in this respect [i.e. sexual mores] than his surroundings demand, and … thus his family life is less efficient for its onerous social duties, his womanhood less protected, his children more poorly trained. All this, however, is to be expected. This is what slavery meant, and no amount of kindliness in individual owners could save the system from its deadly work of disintegrating the ancient Negro home and putting but a poor substitute in its place.

...

But the curse of such [Southern] families, with slaves at the bottom and a privileged aristocracy at the top, ever was and ever will be, sexual debauchery. The morals of black women and white men are found to be ruined under such an arrangement, unless long revered custom and self-respect enter to check license. But the African home with its customs had long ago been swept away, and slavery is simply a system for crushing self-respect.

(see also Du Bois, *Souls*, p. 6, and Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 35-36, 40-41, 43-44)

326 In *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois also points up the appalling consequences of Reconstruction's overthrow—economic super-exploitation and murderous white lawlessness—on Negro morale and morals.

The result of all this had to be unfortunate for the Negro. He was a caged human being, driven into a curious mental provincialism. An inferiority complex dominated him. He did not believe himself a man like other men. He could not teach his children self-respect. The Negro as a group gradually lost his manners, his courtesy, his lighthearted kindliness. Large numbers sank into apathy and fatalism! There was no chance for the black man; there was no use in striving; ambition was not for Negroes. The effect of caste on the moral integrity of the Negro race in America has thus been widely disastrous; servility and fawning, gross flattery of white folk and lying to appease and cajole them; failure to achieve dignity and self-respect and moral self-assertion, personal cowardliness and submission to insult and aggression; exaggerated and despicable humility; lack of faith of Negroes in themselves and in other Negroes and in all colored folk; inordinate admiration for the stigmata of success among white folk: wealth and arrogance, cunning dishonesty

and assumptions of superiority; the exaltation of laziness and indifference as just as successful as the industry and striving which invites taxation and oppression; dull apathy and cynicism; faith in no future and the habit of moving and wandering in search of justice; a religion of prayer and submission to replace determination and effort. These are not universal results or else the Negro long since would have dwindled and died in crime and disease. But they are so widespread as to bring inner conflict as baffling as the problems of interracial relations, and they hold back the moral grit and organized effort which are the only hope of survival.

Still, Du Bois espies a ray of hope in the cloud that had settled over Negro life:

On this and in spite of this comes an extraordinary record of accomplishment, a record so contradictory of what one might easily expect that many people and even the Negroes themselves are deceived by it. The real question is not so much what the Negro has done in spite of caste, as what he might have accomplished with reasonable encouragement. He has cut down his illiteracy more than two-thirds in fifty years, but with decent schools it ought to have been cut down 99 per cent. He has accumulated land and property, but has not been able to hold one-tenth of that which he has rightly earned. He has achieved success in many lines, as an inventor, scientist, scholar and writer. But most of his ability has been choked in chain-gangs and by open deliberate discrimination and conspiracies of silence. He has made a place for himself in literature and art, but the great deeps of his artistic gifts have never yet been plumbed. And yet, for all that he has accomplished, not only the nation but the South itself claims credit and actually points to it as proof of the wisdom or at least the innocuousness of organized suppression! It is but human experience to find that the complete suppression of a race is impossible. Despite inner discouragement and submission to the oppression of others there persisted the mighty spirit, the emotional rebound that kept a vast number struggling for its rights, for self-expression, and for social uplift.

(*Black Reconstruction*, pp. 701-3)

327 He was also culpable of what Kendi denotes "class racism"—i.e., "the elite race-classes … judging the poor race-classes by their own cultural and behavioral norms," and "position[ing] the Black poor as inferior to Black elites." (*HTB*, pp. 153, 155) It's just such a "racist" value hierarchy that permeates, suffuses, Du Bois' "thoroughly antiracist" *Philadelphia Negro*:

[The Negro] upper class … forms the realized ideal of the group;

The Negro population is large and varied in character … a curious mingling of respectable working people and some of a better class, with recent immigrations of the semi-criminal class … there live many respectable colored families … with a fringe of more questionable families … intermingled with some estimable families, is a dangerous criminal class;

Broadly speaking, the Negroes as a class dwell in the most unhealthful parts of the city and in the worst houses in those parts; which is of course simply saying that the part of the population having a large degree of poverty, ignorance and general social degradation is usually to be found in the worst portions of our great cities; the low death rate … illustrates the influences of good houses and clean streets in a district where the better class of Negroes have recently migrated;

These are the wards where the best Negro families have been renting and buying homes;

The very poor and semi-criminal class are congregated in the slums…. The vicious and criminal portion do not usually go to church. Those of this class who are poor but decent are next-door neighbors usually to pronounced criminals and prostitutes;

This is one of the best families in the city; they keep one servant…. It is the germ of a great middle class … they are the aristocracy of their own people;

The majority of the well-dressed loafers … are supported by prostitutes and political largesse ... and form the most dangerous class in the community;

In the better class families there is a pleasant family life;

The wards with the best Negro population are…. The worst Negro population is found in…;

Nothing more exasperates the better class of Negroes than this tendency to ignore utterly their existence.

At one point, Du Bois elaborately ranks Philadelphia's Negroes into four grades: from Grade 1, "Families of undoubted respectability earning sufficient income to live well," to Grade 4, "The lowest class of criminals, prostitutes and loafers; the 'submerged tenth.'" (Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, pp. 4, 38, 40, 104, 106, 110, 123, 127, 135, 136, 221, 222; see also Du Bois, *Negro Family*, pp. 134, 135)

328 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 725.

329 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 714, 725.

330 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 725.

331 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 674-78, 700.

332 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 703; see also pp. 670-71.

333 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 678.

334 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 673.

335 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 704-6.

336 See Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 120-21:

That same year [1915] occurred another, and in the end, much more insidious and hurtful attack: the new technique of the moving picture had come to America and the world. But this method of popular entertainment suddenly became great when David Griffith made the film "The Birth of a Nation." He set the pace for a new art and method: the thundering horses, the masked riders, the suspense of plot and the defense of innocent womanhood; all this was thrilling even if melodramatic and overdrawn. This would have been a great step in the development of a motion-picture art, if it had not happened that the director deliberately used as the vehicle of his picture one of the least defensible attacks upon the Negro race, made by Thomas Dixon in his books beginning with the "Leopard's Spots," and in his play "The Clansman." There was fed to the youth of the nation and to the unthinking masses as well as to the world a story which twisted the emancipation and enfranchisement of the slave in a great effort toward universal democracy, into an orgy of theft and degradation and wide rape of white women.

In combating this film, our Association [N.A.A.C.P.] was placed in a miserable dilemma. We had to ask liberals to oppose freedom of art and expression, and it was senseless for them to reply: "Use this art in your own defense." The cost of picture making and the scarcity of appropriate artistic talent made any such immediate answer beyond question. Without doubt the increase of lynching in 1915 and later was directly encouraged by this film. We did what we could to stop its showing and thereby probably succeeded in advertising it even beyond its admittedly notable merits. The combined result of these various events caused a sudden increase of lynching. The number of mob murders so increased that nearly one hundred Negroes were lynched during 1915 and a score of whites, a larger number than had occurred for more than a decade.… [For example,] five

Negroes in Lee County, Georgia, were lynched en masse and there came the horrible public burning of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas, before a mob of thousands of men, women and children. "While a fire was being prepared of boxes, the naked boy was stabbed and the chain put over the tree. He tried to get away, but could not. He reached up to grab the chain and they cut off his fingers. The big man struck the boy on the back of the neck with a knife just as they were pulling him up on the tree. Mr.— thought that was practically the death blow. He was lowered into the fire several times by means of the chain around his neck. Someone said they would estimate the boy had about twenty-five stab wounds, each one of them death-dealing."

337 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 165, 703-4; see also p. 320. For a more contemporary illustration of this phenomenon, see Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: 2004), pp. 410-14. Klarman traced violent Southern resistance to desegregation in the post-World War II era back to the fact that "the South was not an open society characterized by robust debate on racial issues."

338 Sartre, *Antisemite and Jew*:

> To be a Jew is to be … responsible in and through one's own person for the destiny and the very nature of the Jewish people. For, whatever the Jew says or does, and whether he have a clear or vague conception of his responsibilities, it is as if all his acts were subject to a Kantian imperative, as if he had to ask himself before each act: "If all Jews acted as I am going to do, what would happen to Jewish life?"

339 *HTB*, pp. 10 ("policing"), 13 ("antiracist policy"), 94 ("Making individuals"), 98, 205 ("judges draw"); *SFB*, pp. 294, 373, 505 ("stop worrying").

340 Philip S. Foner (ed), *Paul Robeson Speaks* (New York: 1978), p. 266.

341 Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois,* p. 287.

342 *HTB*, p. 38.

343 *SFB*, pp. 125 ("cast aside"), 97-99 (Wheatley), 183 (Douglass). Du Bois observed of Douglass' slave narrative, "no one can read that first thin autobiography of Frederick Douglass and have left many illusions about slavery." (Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 715) He did not, however, hold Wheatley's poetry in high esteem. (*Black Folk*, p. 157)

344 Douglass, *My Bondage and Freedom*, p. 387; Douglass, *Life and Times*, p. 701; Douglass, "Politics an Evil to the Negro" (1871), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 234.

345 Douglass, *Life and Times*, p. 781. In an essay penned during the Civil War, "Why Should a Colored Man Enlist?" (1863), Douglass answered:

> You are a member of a long enslaved and despised race. Men have set down your submission to Slavery and insult, to a lack of manly courage. They point to this fact as demonstrating your fitness only to be a servile class. You should enlist and disprove the slander, and wipe out the reproach. When you shall be seen nobly defending the liberties of your own country against rebels and traitors—brass itself will blush to use such arguments imputing cowardice against you. (*Essential Douglass*, p. 188)

On the Negro's combat performance in the Civil War smashing invidious stereotypes, see also Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, pp. 85, 104, 106-7, 110, 191, 248, 382. Du Bois' acid commentary on this "proof of manhood" also merits lengthy quotation:

> It had been a commonplace thing in the North to declare that Negroes would not fight. Even the black man's friends were skeptical about the possibility of using him as a soldier,

and far from its being to the credit of black men, or any men, that they did not want to kill, the ability and willingness to take human life has always been, even in the minds of liberal men, a proof of manhood. It took in many respects a finer type of courage for the Negro to work quietly and faithfully as a slave while the world was fighting over his destiny, than it did to seize a bayonet and rush mad with fury or inflamed with drink, and plunge it into the bowels of a stranger. Yet this was the proof of manhood required of the Negro. He might plead his cause with the tongue of Frederick Douglass, and the nation listened almost unmoved. He might labor for the nation's wealth, and the nation took the results without thanks, and handed him as near nothing in return as would keep him alive. He was called a coward and a fool when he protected the women and children of his master. But when he rose and fought and killed, the whole nation with one voice proclaimed him a man and brother. Nothing else made emancipation possible in the United States. Nothing else made Negro citizenship conceivable, but the record of the Negro soldier as a fighter.

...

How extraordinary, and what a tribute to ignorance and religious hypocrisy, is the fact that in the minds of most people, even those of liberals, only murder makes men. The slave pleaded; he was humble; he protected the women of the South, and the world ignored him. The slave killed white men; and behold, he was a man!

346 "Extract from a Speech on the West India Emancipation" (1881), in *Essential Douglass*, p. 257. Du Bois said pretty much the same thing in a speech circa 1940; see Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 312—

> The problem before us clearly stated is this: to put 14 million people to work so that they may receive an income which will insure a civilized standard of living…; with the eventual object of giving this group sufficient leisure to advance by means of talented persons among them in science and art and cultural patterns. And with the further idea that insofar as these objects are successful, the group will become nearer to actual equality with their fellow Americans and to civilized people the world over, and will thus remove from color prejudice a very real reason for its perpetuation.

347 *SFB*, pp. 92-103. Du Bois at one point observes that "individual Negroes became exhibits of the possibilities of the Negro race," but he clearly extols the power of such "exhibits." He notes, for example,

> the propaganda which made the abolition movement terribly real was the Fugitive Slave —the piece of intelligent humanity who could say: I have been owned like an ox. I stole my own body and now I am hunted by law and lash to be made an ox again. By no conception of justice could such logic be answered. (*Black Reconstruction*, pp. 14, 20)

348 *SFB*, pp. 124-25, 505; Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: 1988), p. 273.

349 *SFB*, pp. 303-4.

350 The curious paradox of the Black achiever was thus captured by Du Bois: "The highest class of any group represents its possibilities rather than its exceptions, as is so often assumed in regard to the Negro." (*Philadelphia Negro*, p. 225)

351 In a separate opinion, Justice Brennan likewise observed that "State programs ... may ... reinforce the views of those who believe that members of racial minorities are inherently incapable of succeeding on their own." Brennan denied, however, that minority applicants admitted under affirmative action to medical school would forever be stigmatized, as they still had to "satisfy the same degree requirements as regularly admitted students; they are

taught by the same faculty in the same classes; and their performance is evaluated by the same standards by which regularly admitted students are judged." A rational and noble hope but, all the same, wishful thinking: however stellar their academic performance, affirmative action inevitably casts a shadow over minority graduates of professional schools.

352 *SFB*, p. 356.

353 "At 34 years old, Dr. Kendi was the youngest ever winner of the NBA for Nonfiction. He grew up dreaming about playing in the NBA (National Basketball Association), and ironically he ended up joining the other NBA." (www.ibramxkendi.com/bio); *HTB*, pp. 235-36)

354 *SFB*, p. 507.

355 *HTB*, p. 208.

356 Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights,* pp. 95-96, 160, 334, 360, 362, 381, 458-9. A year after the Court delivered its 1954 *Brown* decision, it handed down *Brown II*, which mandated that desegregation proceed with "all deliberate speed." As it stipulated no timetable, *Brown II* was reckoned a victory by segregationists who could henceforth control the pace of desegregation. Beginning in 1960, direct-action protests—sit-ins, Freedom Rides—swept the South. The percentage of southern Black children in desegregated schools rose from 1 percent in 1964 to 6 percent in 1966, 17 percent in 1967, 32 percent in 1969, and 90 percent in 1973.

357 *HTB*, p. 207; *SFB*, pp. 376, 506.

358 To be sure, it is not in dispute that global indignation at the blight of American racism was a factor in the passage of civil rights legislation. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, pp. 182-84, 194-95, 210, 215-16, 291, 299.

359 *HTB*, p. 204.

360 Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, pp. 364, 380. At one point, Kendi asserts that "Klan terrorism showed the charade that was always the strategy of uplift suasion." (*SFB*, p. 249) He seems unaware that, be it Abolitionism or the Civil Rights Movement, the thrust of these campaigns was not to convert the perpetrators of violence but, on the contrary, to mobilize national support so as to subdue them. "I have an abiding conviction founded upon long and careful study of the certain effects of slavery upon the moral sense of slaveholding communities," Douglass, keenly limning the political dynamic, observed, "that if the slaves are ever delivered from bondage, the power will emanate from the free states. All hope that the slaveholders will be self-moved to this great act of justice, is groundless and delusive." ("The Dred Scott Decision," in *Essential Douglass*, p. 127) When he was arraigned by a court in 1956 during the Montgomery bus boycott, King thusly assessed the social forces bearing on the judge: "To convict me he had to face the condemnation of the nation and world opinion; to acquit me he had to face the condemnation of the local community." (Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery story* (Boston, 2010), p. 140) "The key to everything is Federal commitment, full, unequivocal and unremitting," King observed in 1962. "Initiatives by the Negro movement, coordinated with willing, active, and extensive support of government, can transform ripened situations, without violence, into the fruit of democratic victory." (*The Progressive*,

December 1962) On King targeting Northern as against Southern white opinion, see also Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, p. 429.

361 King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, p. 60.

362 Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail.*

363 Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, p. 429.

364 *SFB*, pp. 370 ("noble campaigns," Harrington), 384-86 and 391-92 (Civil Rights legislation), 388 ("persuasion"); but cf. pp. 416-17, where Kendi grudgingly credits the "emergence" of a Black middle-class in the 1970s to "the activism and reforms of the civil rights *and* Black Power movements as well as of the strong economy of the 1960s" (his emphasis).

365 Burton and Derfner, *Justice Deferred*, p. 197.

366 *SFB*, 399-400.

367 King, *Radical King*, p. 249.

368 Even as pressures exerted on King by Black militants mounted at the end of his life, he held fast that "I'm still absolutely convinced that nonviolence, massively organized, powerfully executed, militantly developed, is still the most potent weapon available to the black man in his struggle in the United States of America." (King, *Radical King*, p. 239)

369 Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, pp. 344-442.

370 King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, p. 27.

371 *SFB*, pp. 374 (citing *Letter from Birmingham Jail*), 397 (Panther platform); King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, p. 59 (Watts). Kendi alleges (without citation) that Du Bois demurred at the "nonviolent resistance" strategy of the Civil Rights Movement. (*SFB*, p. 370) But as late as 1940, Du Bois wrote:

> I do not believe in the dogma of inevitable revolution in order to right economic wrong. I think war is worse than hell, and that it seldom or never forwards the advance of the world…. [T]he heights and fastnesses which we black folk were assailing, could not in America be gained by sheer force of assault, because of our relatively small numbers. They could only be gained as the majority of Americans were persuaded of the rightness of our cause and joined with us in demanding our recognition as full citizens…. Intelligent propaganda, legal enactment and reasoned action must attack the conditioned reflexes of race hate and change them." (Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 151; see also Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, p. 667)

One would be hard-pressed to make out a difference between this Du Bois and King. Like many woke "radicals," Kendi is a vicarious Panther groupie. (*SFB*, pp. 397, 401-2) But, apart from media notoriety, exactly what the Panthers concretely achieved is a black box. The default response by its acolytes is the preschool free breakfast program. Beginning in 1969 at age 16, I was a volunteer in Project Headstart, and I later taught in an afterschool program for children from indigent families. Even as free breakfast, lunch, and snack were served, it wasn't incumbent upon me that I show up for work in Black beret, shades, and leather jacket, weapon in hand. The police assassination of several Panthers was a heinous criminal act, although it should perhaps also be noted that, if the Panthers shouted "Off the Pigs!," it was not altogether surprising that the "Pigs" decided to off them first. White wannabe radicals and the Panthers entered into a mutually lucrative business partnership: Whites fastened onto the Panthers to burnish their revolutionary street cred, while Panthers guilt-tripped whites in an extortion racket. To hi-five the Panthers at his radical-

chic soiree, conductor Leonard Bernstein paid out in mega-bucks—and alas, after Tom Wolfe immortalized the evening (*Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers*), in indelible self-mortification.

372 *HTB*, p. 206; *SFB*, p. 508.

373 Certain planks in the Sanders platform forthrightly prioritized disadvantaged, beleaguered minorities and the most destitute. The Green New Deal plank called for "an historic $16.3 trillion public investment … in line with the mobilization of resources made during the New Deal and WWII, but with an explicit choice to include black, indigenous and other minority communities who were systematically excluded in the past," as well as "Justice for frontline communities—especially under-resourced groups, communities of color, Native Americans, people with disabilities, children and the elderly—to recover from, and prepare for, the climate impacts, including through a $40 billion Climate Justice Resiliency Fund. And providing those … communities a just transition including real jobs, resilient infrastructure, economic development." The Marijuana plank read: "—Legalize marijuana in the first 100 days with executive action; —Vacate and expunge all past marijuana-related convictions; —Use revenue from marijuana sales to establish a targeted $10 billion U.S.D.A. grant program to help disproportionately impacted areas and individuals, who have been arrested for or convicted of marijuana offenses, start urban and rural farms and urban and rural marijuana growing operations to ensure [that] people impacted by the war on drugs have access to the entire marijuana industry;—Create a $10 billion targeted economic and community development fund to provide grants to communities hit hardest by the War on Drugs."

374 *HTB*, p. 205; *SFB*, pp. 503, 506-8.

375 *HTB*, p. 232.

376 *HTB*, p. 209.

377 The long and the short of Kendi's ballyhooed "activism" comes to chastising a couple of his grade school teachers and a principal, and briefly joining a racial justice struggle while in college, in which, by his own admission, "all my words were doing was sounding radical." (*HTB*, pp. 36, 44-55 *passim*, 210-12) His insights into activism also don't exactly overwhelm:

> The most effective demonstrations (like the most effective educational efforts) help people find the antiracist power within. The antiracist power within is the ability to view my own racism in the mirror of my past and present, view my own antiracism in the mirror of my future, view my own racial groups as equal to other racial groups, view the world of racial inequity as abnormal, view my own power to resist and overtake racist power and policy. [Whatever this gibberish means, it shouldn't surprise that our GQ antiracist keeps invoking the metaphor of mirror-gazing]
>
> …
>
> The most effective protests have been fiercely local; they are protests that have been started by antiracists focusing on their immediate surroundings…. These local protests have then become statewide protests, and statewide protests have then become national protests, and national protests have then become international protests. But it all starts with one person, or two people, or tiny groups, in their small surroundings, engaging in energetic mobilization of antiracists into organizations; and chess-like planning and adjustments during strikes, occupations, insurrections, campaigns, and fiscal and bodily

boycotts, among a series of other tactics to force power to eradicate racist policies. Antiracist protesters have created positions of power for themselves, by articulating clear demands and making it clearer that they will not stop—and policing forces cannot stop them—until their demands are met. [For further instruction, see *An Idiot's Guide to Making Revolution*]

...

Seizing power is much harder than protesting power and demonstrating its excesses. [Do tell, Che]

(*HTB*, pp. 215, 216; *SFB*, p. 510)

378 His other practical policy recommendations consist of eradicating: "any beauty standard based on skin and eye color, hair texture, facial and bodily features shared by groups"; Christianity as the "unofficial standard religion"; men's suits as "standard professional attire"; English as the "standard language"; and assessment by "standardized tests." (Surprisingly, he doesn't weigh in on the burning question of 'fro versus dreads.) He also advocates "open and equal access to all public accommodations, open access to all integrated White spaces, integrated Middle Eastern spaces, integrated Black spaces, integrated Latinx spaces, integrated Native spaces, and integrated Asian spaces that are as equally resourced as they are culturally different." (Am I the only one left wondering how a "space" can be both homogeneous and heterogeneous?) (*HTB*, pp. 113-14, 180; *SFB*, p. 469)

379 *HTB*, pp. 129-30, 205-9.

380 *HTB*, p. 192.

381 *HTB*, p. 197. Of gender and sex, Kendi also has this to say: "the ways women and men traditionally act are not tied to their biology; … men can authentically perform femininity as effectively as women can authentically perform masculinity." (*HTB*, p. 196) Were this true, the wonder would be why transgender people undergo costly, painful, protracted medical procedures to alter their sex.

382 *HTB*, pp. 167-68.

383 See Gabe Kaminsky, "Ibram X. Kendi Raked in $45K from University of Wisconsin, Made School Delete Lecture," *Federalist* (9 December 2021).

384 about.netflix.com/en/news/netflix-partners-with-renowned-author-dr-ibram-x-kendi-to-bring-three-of-his

385Chris Hedges, "The Obama Deception," *truthdig.com* (16 May 2011) ("mascot"); David Remnick, *The Bridge: The life and rise of Barack Obama* (New York: 2011), pp. 195-96, 361-62, 380.

386 When Obama first started out in politics, he did stand accused of being insufficiently Black by other Black politicians as well as elements of the Black community. Once he attained high office, however, it ceased to be an issue.

387 *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guess_Who%27s_Coming_to_Dinner).

388 *A Natural Woman* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=efIAM5dzuDs).

389 David J. Garrow, *Rising Star: The making of Barack Obama* (New York: 2017), pp. 337, 347-48, 414, 421, 422, 428. In his presidential memoir, Obama makes no less than *fourteen* references to his "organizing days," and it figured as a central motif in the public image contrived by Obama's chief campaign strategist, David Axelrod. (Barack Obama, A

Promised Land (New York: 2020), pp. 16, 20, 23, 59, 63, 95, 103, 106, 196, 231, 300, 366; David Axelrod, *Believer: My forty years in politics* (New York: 2015), pp. 155, 210, 213, 228, 273, 446, 449) Like many a student coming from privilege, Obama took time off after college to "find himself" in an idealistic undertaking, whilst it also couldn't hurt if his mediocre academic resumé were padded by a stint among "the underprivileged." He put in less than three years as an organizer and, by his own reckoning, his achievements were "extraordinarily modest." Already by the end of his first year, this "community organizer" had soured on it and planned to attend law school. Still, even after he had long resolved on a political career, openly disparaged community organizing, and been elected to the top post at *Harvard Law Review*, Obama was still talking his "community organizer" jive as he coyly pretended that he might yet return to this humble calling. Once in office, he dripped with contempt at his fellow organizers who had stayed the course. (Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 233, 273, 276-77, 285-89, 294, 302, 314 ("extraordinarily"), 319, 344, 345, 393, 401, 443, 732)

390 Edward McClelland, *Young Mr. Obama: Chicago and the making of a Black president* (New York: 2010), p. 86; David Litt, *Thanks, Obama: My hopey, changey White House years* (New York: 2017), pp. 98-99.

391 The exceptions, all from early in his career, appear to be the 2002 Iraq speech, the 2004 Democratic National Convention keynote address, and the 2008 "race speech" (the last, a partial exception).

392 Although you'd never know it from the pride Obama took in his zingers, the material for his comedic presentations was also trawled from Hollywood and volunteer contributors across the country. (Litt, *Thanks*, pp. 119-20)

393 Litt, *Thanks*, p. 179. Although his presidential campaign manager, David Plouffe, raves about Obama's speechwriting gifts, he, too, can't seem to get straight whether Obama actually wrote his speeches or—as Plouffe's own testimony establishes—just threw in a couple of cents after they'd been crafted for him. (David Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: How Obama won and how we can beat the party of Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin* (New York: 2010), pp. 40-41, 110-11, 114-15)

394 See below.

395 His presidential memoir is replete with this "America the Beautiful" twaddle. (Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 14, 107, 150, 329, 339, 463)

396 Garrow, *Rising Star,* pp. 58, 124. He also cultivated a persona in this period of his life reminiscent of the wayward expat in Paris, collar turned up, dabbling in Sartrean existentialism.

397 E.J. Dionne Jr. and Joy-Ann Reid, *We Are the Change We Seek: The speeches of Barack Obama* (New York: 2018), pp. 312-13.

398 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 49 ("conduit"); Litt, *Thanks*, p. 20 ("message").

399 It bewilders that Obama's campaign manager could purport that "race ... had been largely a nonfactor" in the presidential campaign and "for the most part was not on voters' minds." (Plouffe, *Audacity*, pp. 125, 211)

400 Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 245. Plouffe salutes Axelrod as "the godfather of Illinois Democratic politics." *The Godfather*: that's the right scene-setter. Even as he plied his trade in notoriously corrupt Chicago, Axelrod conceived himself as a pragmatic idealist. If he was

an idealist, it was only *relative to* the sleazy company he kept. By Axelrod's own reckoning, a fair share of his clients (Rod Blagojevich, Richard M. Daley, Dan Rostenkowski, Michael White...) ended up fending off corruption charges or behind bars. Of Illinois senator Paul Simon, whom he professes to deeply respect, Axelrod quips that he was "an aspiring hack trapped in a reformer's body." Having grown, by the epilogue of his memoir, older and wiser, Axelrod reaches the epiphany that even egregiously corrupt racist politicians aren't so terrible, after all. In other words, he's matured into a full-blown, bona fide dirt-bag. Axelrod's own personal hero was Bobby Kennedy. The younger Kennedy cut his political teeth as an acolyte of Joseph McCarthy. While serving as brother J.F.K.'s Attorney-General, R.F.K. presided over Operation Mongoose, the terror campaign targeting Cuba after its revolution, approved F.B.I. wiretaps on Martin Luther King, Jr., and was a hawk on Vietnam. As opposition to the Vietnam War swelled, he opportunistically jumped into the 1968 presidential race posing as an antiwar candidate. That's Axelrod's paragon of political virtue. Another of his enduring political heroes is the very smart but utterly amoral Bill Clinton: "I believed in him." Then there's Elie Wiesel, C.E.O. of Holocaust Inc.: "Of all the people I had the honor to meet during my years in the White House, none moved or impressed me more than Wiesel, who would become a loving friend and mentor. Somehow, when I am with him, I feel closer to God." He doesn't say how much God billed per visit. Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 8 ("godfather"); Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 21 (Kennedy), 86 (racist), 98 ("believed"), 104 ("aspiring"), 410 (Wiesel), 481-82 (epiphany).

401 Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 227.

402 In his memoir, Axelrod recreates the earlier campaigns he managed. The political persona he fabricated for Obama was vintage Axelrod. Here's his campaign strategy back in 1992 for a Senate candidate whom he describes as "an attractive political outsider with a good up-by-the-bootstraps story":

> We launched with a simple, direct-to-camera ad that amounted to a declaration of war on ... politics as usual. "My name is Al Hofeld, and I'm about to break the rules," the shirtsleeved challenger began.... "I'm running for the United States Senate, where the rules say you should be everyone's pal, sell yourself to the special interests.... Well, I refuse to take a dime of special interest PAC money because we won't get national health care until we're ready to take on the insurance lobby.... You see, Congress is all tied up in knots by the special interests, and they never get around to giving us what we need: tax relief for middle-income families.... So if you feel you're being heard in Washington, then I'm not your guy. But if you're fed up like I am, then let's break the rules."

Here's the media persona he forged for another 1992 Senate candidate, Carol Moseley Braun, an African-American:

> We wanted to give voters a ... stake in her success by offering her improbable rise as a parable about our country at its best. An ad we ran in the closing week reflected the strategy. "When I began this race a year ago, I was called a hopeless underdog. But I was outraged about how they do business in Washington. It turned out a lot of you were outraged, too. And, together, we overcame the odds [in the primary] and sent a message of change and hope. On Tuesday, you can send more than a message. You can send a vote. For guaranteed health care. For policies that will create jobs and opportunity. For an America where we finally put people first ... and where even an underdog can win."

And here's the memo in which Axelrod laid out his same old strategy, albeit slightly

tweaked, for Obama's Senate bid:

> Obama's record of advocacy for the middle class was powerful and important, I wrote, "but ... simply checking off issue boxes would be to rob this campaign of its full power. Against a backdrop of the paralyzing partisanship and special interest hegemony in Washington, voters are responding to a candidate who has the integrity, temperament and proven commitment to challenge the status quo and get things done. Barack stands apart from the mess they see, preaching a politics of civility and community, of mutual respect and responsibility.... Our challenge is to maintain that tone, protect that special character and sincerity and always bear in mind that the brain dead politics of Washington is ... our target."

Axelrod goes on to highlight his "tone" as "the essence of Obama's appeal. The core of his 'brand.'" (Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 102-5, 162, 194, 245, 251)

403 Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 146, 226. Bill Clinton's presidential campaign slogans and rhetoric had sounded the identical notes: "we are too divided. It is time to heal America," "Change vs. More of the Same," "You have to decide whether you want change or not," "Change Is on the Way," "New Beginnings, Renewed Hope," "Bells of Hope," "Faces of Hope," and, of course, defending the "forgotten middle class." Bill Clinton, *My Life*, pp. 374 ("middle class"; see also 390, 419, 491-95 passim, 635, 637, 638, 641, 645, 659), 420 ("divided"), 425 ("Change vs"), 437 ("You have to"), 444 ("Change is"), 471 ("New," "Bells"), 472 ("Faces").

404 Robert Gates, for example, had been George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense and "a fixture for four decades in the country's national security establishment." (Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 391)

405 In the Bill Clinton administration, Emanuel "helped orchestrate" the notorious 1994 Crime Bill, leading to mass incarceration of African-Americans, and "spearheaded passage" of the anti-labor North American Free Trade Agreement (N.A.F.T.A.). After leaving the Clinton administration, "in two short years as a corporate dealmaker, he had pocketed millions." (His background in high finance comprised studying ballet at Sarah Lawrence College.) The "Change That You Can Believe In" President chose him for chief of staff as "he's got the right experience. He's smart and tough. And he's a friend." (Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 125-26, 325) It can't but be noticed Emanuel's physiognomic resemblance to that other "smart and tough" paragon of virtue, Roy Cohn.

406 Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 324, 352.

407 He characterizes Obama as "no dreamy reformer. He was idealistic in his aspirations, but pragmatic in his pursuit of them," "progressive in his goals, but practical in pursuing them." In other words, he differed not a whit from every other centrist Democrat, about whom this twaddle could be said. Thus, Bill Clinton described Hillary, who was Obama's chief rival in the 2008 primary, as "both idealistic and practical." (Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 137, 367, see also pp. 124, 140-41, 193, 220, 411; Clinton, *My Life*, p. 183)

408 Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 364-65.

409 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 77-8 ("oath," "If we won"; see also p. 663).

410 Trotsky's description of the ascension of Stalin—"a man of mediocre capacities"—to power. ("Stalin after the Finnish Experience" (13 March 1940), in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940* (New York: 1977), p. 160)

411 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 166.

412 Litt, *Thanks*, p. 193.

413 Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 731, 1022, 1069.

414 Clinton, *My Life*, pp. 284 ("loved"), 285 ("loved"), 288 ("excitement"), 361 ("excited"). Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: 1995), pp. 70-71 (policy agenda). Albeit fiercely competitive, Obama appears not to have a political bone in his body. "My entire politics," he told a sycophantic interviewer, "is premised on the fact that we are these tiny organisms on this little speck floating in the middle of space,... that the differences we have on this planet are real. They're profound, and they cause enormous tragedy as well as joy. But we're just a bunch of humans with doubts and confusions." This isn't politics, which speaks to the urgency of the moment; it's New Age Philosophy 101. Ezra Klein, "Obama Explains How America Went from 'Yes We Can' to 'Maga,'" *New York Times* (1 June 2021). If Obama rarely commented on political happenings after he left office, it was partly owing to his belief that too many statements would cheapen his currency. Better to let the public wait in burning anticipation for the next pronouncement from the Vineyard Oracle. But the deeper truth was, if it wasn't the N.B.A. playoffs or Oscars and Grammys night, he didn't much care what was going on outside his bubble.

415 Carter, *Keeping Faith*, pp. 114 ("approached"), 123 ("bogged"), 193 ("Kissinger"), 245 ("Brezhnev"), 287 ("awful"), 289 (Sadat visit), 297 (July 4th), 326 ("thick volume"), 327 ("negotiating strategy"), 329 ("annotated"), 372 ("pored"), 275-438 (Camp David Accords), 589 (Iran hostages), 591 (Alaska); see also *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980*, Arab-Israeli Dispute, vol. VIII (January 1977-August 1978)—vol. IX (August 1978-December 1980) (Washington: 2013, 2014). Clinton, *My Life*, pp. 237 (voodoo), 326 ("animal"), 352 ("loved"); "Larry Summers at Room for Discussion" (3 November 2014; www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLLnVVii56A); Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 429 and 461-62 (outwitted).

416 Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 1063, 1067, 1070; Sara Sorcher, "Obama Blames Hawaii for His 'Deep Down' Laziness," *Atlantic* (23 December 2011).

417 To rationalize his vertiginous political ascent (he decided on a presidential run less than a year after he entered the U.S. Senate), Obama maintained that he could get more done on a wider playing field. But was this "community organizer" unaware that, before organizing a block, you must first learn the ropes of organizing a building? He would additionally purport that as President he wouldn't be encumbered by the pettifogging rules and interminable banter of Congress. But wasn't this constitutional scholar privy to the fact that, in order to enact legislation, he would have to garner the support of the legislative branch of government? In other words, these rationalizations of his power-lust, faithfully repeated by his handlers, were malarkey. (Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 58, 63-64; Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 168, 381)

418 Strangely, after homing in on Obama's theatrical gifts and relish for approval, Litt writes that "POTUS hated political theater." (Litt, *Thanks*, pp. 98, 149, 151) In his presidential memoir, Obama professes both to disdain the "fuss of being president, the pomp, the press" and to be ignorant of celebrity culture—even as he was palpably invigorated by them. It would appear that, like the Player Queen in *Hamlet*, he doth protest too much. (Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 539, 664)

419 In just his first term of office, Obama delivered 1,852 public speeches and granted 591

media interviews. (Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 1064, 1068-69)

420 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 89.

421 Litt, *Thanks*, p. 199.

422 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 524-25 (see also p. 594).

423 *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Smith_Goes_to_Washington).

424 Garrow, *Rising Star*, p. 1078.

425 Obama justifies his dependence on these Establishment types on the grounds that his priority was to stabilize the economy and, accordingly, he "needed people who had managed crises before." The likes of Summers also, and not incidentally, *caused* The Great Recession. And even after Summers submitted his resignation at the end of 2010 "as the financial crisis [was] behind us," it wasn't as if Obama's pick for his replacement, Eugene Sperling (both he and Summers had served in the Clinton administration), or most of Obama's economic appointments while he still held office, bucked the reigning orthodoxy. (Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 182, 211)

426 Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 359.

427 In 2016, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, whom Obama had appointed head of the Democratic National Committee, rigged the Democratic primaries against Bernie Sanders. Amid calls to oust her, Obama sprang to Wasserman Schultz's defense: "I want to make sure we have her back." After Wikileaks released dozens of emails documenting Wasserman Schultz' machinations against Bernie, she was forced to resign. Obama, who played no part in her ouster (it was engineered by Hillary Clinton), called Wasserman Schultz to say "she will always be our dear friend." It might be supposed that he acted out of loyalty and faithfulness, except that those virtues do not figure in Obama's MO. During the 2020 primary, Obama openly disparaged "crazy" leftwing politics and signaled via surrogates that should Bernie's surge in the primaries continue, POTUS would publicly weigh in to stop him. After Bernie's defeat in the South Carolina primary and just before Super Tuesday, Obama privately arm-twisted other Democratic primary candidates to drop out so as to insure Joe Biden's victory. Harper Neidig, "Obama: I have Wasserman Schultz's back," *The Hill* (3 June 2016); Hanna Trudo, "Obama Says He Has Wasserman Schultz's Back," *Politico* (3 June 2016); Stephanie Akin, "5 Times Debbie Wasserman Schultz Angered Her Own Party," *Roll Call* (5 May 2016); Glenn Thrush et al., "Inside the Scramble to Oust Debbie Wasserman Schultz," *Politico* (25 July 2016); Ryan Lizza, "Barack Obama Wins the Democratic Primary," *Politico* (September 4, 2020).

428 It was this white patronage that caused W. E. B. Du Bois to be skeptical of jazz as an art form. (W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An essay toward an autobiography of a race concept* (New York: 2007), p. 102)

429 Adolph Reed has quite properly dubbed them the "wet panties brigade."

430 Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 22.

431 Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York: 1970), p. 331.

432 David Remnick, *The Bridge: The life and rise of Barack Obama* (New York: 2011), pp. 91 ("McLachlin's"), 232-35 ("Malcolm," "more privileged," "autobiography"), 274 ("bored"), 277 and 285 ("memoir"), 488 ("reverence"), 503 ("color"), 525 ("post-modern"), 543 ("cult"), 585-86 (Stokely, Huey); Garrow, *Rising Star*, p. 537 ("*historical fiction*"); Obama, *Promised*

Land, pp. 57 ("overcoming"), 663 ("wave"); Ben Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A memoir of the Obama White House* (New York: 2018), p. 23 (Obama cult); Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 316 (Obama cult).

433 Remnick, *Bridge*, pp. 150 ("North Korean"), 346-48 ("exquisitely"); Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 47 ("prescient"); Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 130 (abet). Obama was asked to give the speech by Bettylu Saltzman, a progressive Democratic Party moneybags. The "prescient" remarks in Obama's speech were supposedly these:

> I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al Qaeda.

Here's how historian Perry Anderson, writing on the eve of the U.S. attack, summarized the consensus antiwar position:

> Even if an invasion of Iraq went smoothly, an occupation of the country is too hazardous and costly an undertaking for the United States to pull off successfully. Allied participation is necessary for it to have any chance of succeeding, but the Administration's unilateralism compromises the chance of that. The Arab world is likely to view a foreign protectorate with resentment. Even with a Western coalition to run the country, Iraq is a deeply divided society, with no democratic tradition, which cannot easily be rebuilt along postwar German or Japanese lines. The potential costs of the whole venture outweigh any possible benefits the U.S. could garner from it. (*London Review of Books*, 6 March 2003)

434 Remnick, *Bridge*, p. 524 ("anthropological"); Garrow, *Rising Star*, **religion, marriage**—pp. 272, 277, 278, 298 ("bone"), 316 ("marry"), 469-70, 909 ("scores"), 952; **grandmother, pastor**—pp. 1043-44, 1047; **race-consciousness or the lack thereof**—pp. 102-3, 122, 170, 232, 245, 246, 273, 953 ("passing in reverse"); **disloyalty to friends**—p. 1067; McClelland, *Young Mr. Obama*, pp. 183, 232 ("disloyalty"; this biography is an overwhelmingly favorable portrait but it's not impervious to unflattering facts). In his presidential memoir, Obama seemingly atones for his sin against his grandmother, dotting his text with devotional passages to her and reporting a telephone conversation—real or contrived, it's impossible to say—between them right after the race speech in which he breaks down in tears as she forgives him; while he finely balances dismissal and acknowledgment of his traduced pastor, depicting him as having "played a small but significant part in making me the man that I was." Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 143 (grandmother), 147 (pastor).

435 Remnick, *Bridge*, pp. 408 ("politician"), 535 ("win"); Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 365-66, 638 (Cairo speech); Rhodes, *World*, p. 61 (triggered).

436 Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 28.

437 Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 32.

438 Plouffe, *Audacity*, pp. 103-4. Axelrod credits the "Change" slogan to a member of his staff. (*Believer*, p. 234)

439 Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 142-43; Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 49, 111. For the record, this slogan long predated Obama's candidacy. The Black entertainer Sammy Davis Jr.'s autobiography was titled *Yes, I Can*, while the official slogan of the insurgent United

Farmworkers Union led by Cesar Chavez was *Yes, We Can* (*Si, Se Puede*). In the U.F.W. instance, the slogan denoted something very specific: Yes, the super-exploited Chicano laborers can organize a union.

440 Dionne and Reid, *We Are the Change*, pp. 46, 340.

441 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* (New York: 1964), p. 252.

442 Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (New York: 1971), p. 401.

443 There was also a shade of difference on whether or not to include in their respective health care plans a health care mandate (Hillary, yes; Obama, no, but he eventually came around to her position). (Plouffe, *Audacity*, pp. 84-85, 226; Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 231, 266, 279-80)

444 The vacuity of Obama's campaign was not altogether lost on voters. "We had long faced a chorus of criticism that we were too light on specifics," his campaign manager recalled. "Too much hope, just give us the dope, said some." In unwitting irony, Plouffe repeatedly highlights the centrality of the "message" in the Obama campaign, even as this message was, by his own admission, content-less. (Plouffe, *Audacity*, pp. 236-38, 304, 311)

445 "This is not about issue differences, other than Iraq," Axelrod reminded the campaign team. "It's about leadership qualities and vision." (Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 110)

446 Obama expresses surprise in his memoir that "nobody had been listening to the campaign promises I'd made." Yet, by his own reckoning, if he won, it was because whatever campaign promises he did make were calculatingly drowned out by the cacophony of his banalities. He rationalizes the centrist politics of his term of office on the grounds that, domestically, that was all the political traffic would bear while, internationally, a more progressive agenda was politically naïve. Thus, he opposed a larger stimulus package because, according to his Chief of Staff (Rahm Emanuel), there was "no fucking way" Congress would acquiesce; he dismissed the agenda of climate activists because "having me paint doomsday scenarios was a bad electoral strategy"; and he says of Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush who he then appointed his own Defense Secretary, "on most national security issues our judgments aligned." Remnick, *The Bridge*, p. 587; Michael Powell, "Obama, the Self-Described 'Rorschach Test,' Liberal but Inscrutable," *New York Times* (4 June 2008); Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 210 ("trick," "canvas"), 237 ("fucking"), 285 ("listening"), 430 ("aligned"), 446 ("cheering"), 490 ("doomsday"), 602 ("observance").

447 In a rare moment of genuine introspection, Obama recalls in his presidential memoir some rap lyrics that resonated with him, as they described "how it felt to spin something out of nothing, getting by on wit, hustle, and fear disguised as bravado." If Obama was notoriously thin-skinned, it traced back not just to his egoism, but the fact that only a thin veneer concealed his real self from the wholly manufactured public image. Even a nick in that veneer, he dreaded, would crack the whole of it, so he reacted preemptively with a fury to the barest hint that he was a fraud. (*Promised Land*, p. 191; Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 198)

448 Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 291.

449 And even among those from whom one expected, or hoped for, better, such as Bernie Sanders. The pathetic record in a single volume goes to Axelrod, who lauds his client as

"brilliant" or some variant thereof ("I have never met a brighter person") no less than eight times in his memoir. (Bernie Sanders, *Our Revolution* (New York: 2016), p. 46; Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 8, 154, 155, 157, 255, 356, 439, 443) When His Brilliance strays beyond the tight leash of his phalanx of handlers and protectors, speechwriters and stage managers, things can go awfully awry. A correspondent from the U.K. emailed me this after Obama's speech at a climate conference in Glasgow:

> The ex-President and famous orator essayed a graceful cultural allusion: "since we're in the Emerald Isles here, let me quote the Bard, William Shakespeare. 'What wound,' he wrote, 'did ever heal but by degrees?' Our planet has been wounded by our actions. Those wounds won't be healed today or tomorrow or the next, but they can be healed. By degrees." Apart from the condescending complacency of his comments—climate experts are of one mind that time has run out to heal "by degrees"—he made two howlers in one sentence. The phrase "The Emerald Isle" refers to Ireland, never to Scotland. And William Shakespeare is the national Bard of England. The national Bard of Scotland is Robert Burns. To Scots, "the Bard" means Burns. Surely Obama could have found an appropriate quotation from Burns, who is renowned for his nature poetry. The ex-President's quotation from *Othello* appears to have been chosen because of the Black connection; but it can be pointed out in addition that "what wound did ever heal but by degrees?" is spoken not by the play's noble Black hero but, rather, by the arch-villain Iago.

450 Samantha Power, *The Education of an Idealist* (New York: 2021), p. 148.

451 Obama was almost certainly a beneficiary of affirmative action when Harvard Law School admitted him. His academic performance before Harvard was "unremarkable." Obama himself acknowledges that, "through high school, my friends and I didn't discuss much beyond sports, girls, music, and plans for getting loaded." Still, he now claims that in high school, while "sitting alone in Gramps's rickety old Ford Granada," he "devoured" the literary canon: Dostoyevsky, D. H. Lawrence; W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin; Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Penn. This reconstruction of his can be safely filed under the same tab as Hercules' 12 Labors. (When Obama was asked by an interviewer from a Jewish periodical to elaborate on his intellectual debt to Roth, Bellow, and Mailer, he, noticeably, declined to comment.) He has withheld his undergraduate transcripts from inquiring biographers; no senior faculty at Columbia University—white or Black, in or outside his major—has any recollection of him. During his stint as a community organizer just prior to entering H.L.S., he recalls having "barely enough time to read the newspaper." The year he was accepted, community service "played a significant role in admissions decisions." To say that he was woefully ill-prepared for an elite law school would be an understatement; to credit the testimonies of Tribe, Minow, Frug et al., is to credit miracles; not being woke, this writer refuses to go there. If he was elected president of *Harvard Law Review*, that's because, having no strong opinions on anything, Obama was the ideal compromise candidate between the *Review*'s polarized liberal and conservative factions. In addition, the H.L.S. staff recognized the historic significance, and so could bask in the reflected glory, if they elected the *Review*'s first Black president. In the classroom, Obama was notorious for speaking incessantly (an "Obamanometer" contrived by his classmates gauged the duration and pretentiousness of his remarks). He regularly schmoozed with his professors after class, and he apparently

devised (along with a classmate of his) a test-taking stratagem whereby he repeated distinctive locutions of his from class ("folks" was a favorite) so as to signal to his professors that it was *his* exam they were marking. It's quite easy to imagine the salutary effects of these techniques on his final grades. Obama's classmates would later recollect his singular transactions with Tribe in class: "Jennifer Radding remembered that … 'Tribe was like in love with him in a very intellectual way.'… Seated next to Obama, Scott Scheper had as close a view as anyone.… Scheper recalled that 'Tribe spent a whole lot of time not six feet from me in what almost became personal dialogue between him and Barack.… He would leave the lectern and come over … to our side of the class and be right in front of the front row and then Barack would be talking to him.'" (It can safely be ruled out that it was Obama's, as it were, intellect that aroused Tribe.) Pity no one videotaped these just-shy-of-fellatio scenes for posterity—or Pornhub. The whole of Obama's output as a legal scholar, and even as he taught at University of Chicago Law School and was wooed for a permanent position there, consisted of a lone, six page "comment" on an abortion case. In his presidential memoir, Obama says of the scion of a prominent Indian family that he came across as "a student who'd done the coursework and was eager to impress the teacher but deep down lacked either the aptitude or the passion to master the subject." It sounds familiar. (Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 147 ("poets"), 155 (transcripts), 161 (Columbia faculty), 237 ("newspaper"), 327-28 ("played"), 341-42 ("Obamanometer), 343 (schmoozed), 371 ("Radding"), 377 (Tribe), 379-80 (Tribe, "comment"), 385-86 (Tribe), 388 (H.L.R. president), 390-91 (H.L.R. president), 400 (Frug), 401 (Tribe), 415-16 (Frug's exam, stratagem), 448 (schmoozed, Minow), 452-53 (Minow), 466 (University of Chicago), 566 (University of Chicago); Remnick, *The Bridge*, pp. 79 (canon), 98 ("unremarkable"), 99 ("science"), 193-94 ("quickly," "Einstein"), 200 ("best student"); Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 8-10 ("loaded," "Gramps's," canon), 131 (Du Bois), 602 ("impress"), 627 (canon); Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography* (1998), pp. 155, 158; (Matthew Kassel, "Interview with Barack Obama," *JewishInsider.com* (7 June 2021); *Truthdig.com* (16 May 2011) (Cornel West); Maureen Mackey, "How Barack Obama Amazed His Harvard Law Professor," *The Fiscal Times* (9 July 2014) ("lanky"); the Minow comments on Obama's paper, also reported in Garrow, were obtained from a source who prefers to remain anonymous)

452 *Green Acres* (www.youtube.com/results?search_query=green+acres+theme+song):

Green Acres is the place to be,
Farm living is the life for me.
Land spreading out so far and wide,
Keep Manhattan, just give me that countryside.
…

453 Of his first day in the White House, Obama grandiloquently recalls:

One thing cameras don't capture about the Oval Office is the light. The room is awash in light. On clear days, it pours through the huge windows on its eastern and southern ends, painting every object with a golden sheen that turns fine-grained, then dappled, as the late-afternoon sun recedes. In bad weather, when the South Lawn is shrouded by rain or snow or the rare morning fog, the room takes on a slightly bluer hue but remains undimmed, the weaker natural light boosted by interior bulbs hidden behind a bracketed

cornice and reflecting down from the ceiling and walls. The lights are never turned off, so that even in the middle of the night the Oval Office remains luminescent, flaring against the darkness like a lighthouse's rounded torch. (Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 205-6)

Had Obama invested in his presidency half the intensity he invested in crafting this paragraph, something might have come of his eight years in office. Here, for connoisseurs, is Bill Clinton's take on that Oval Office lighting:

I loved working there. It was always light and open, even on cloudy days, because of the tall windows and glass door toward the south and east. At night the indirect lighting reflected off the curved ceiling, which added light and made it comfortable to work at home.

If he omitted the "dappled" etc. fine points, it's perhaps because he had work to do. (Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: 2005), p. 540)

454 Obama laments that while out on the campaign trail, he missed "a **consistent** shower"; he ponders the disempowering effects of disenfranchisement on Southern Blacks—"the **jaded filter** through which many Black South Carolinians absorbed our campaign"; he regrets causing a stir when he entered the hospital ward of wounded soldiers—"For me, this was one of the **vagaries** of the job, the fact that my presence reliably caused a disruption and a bout of nervousness among those I was meeting." His legions of editors were apparently asleep at the switch. (Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 84, 126-27, 323)

455 It also appears that the volume is a tacit rejoinder to the many less-than-flattering tidbits unearthed by David J. Garrow in his authoritative biography, *Rising Star*: *The making of Barack Obama* (New York: 2017).

456 A typical excruciating passage reads:

I finally rejoined my kids, and Mike [the driver] suggested we leave the zoo and find a quiet place to get ice cream instead. As we drove, Mike stayed mercifully quiet—the girls, not so much.

"I think you need an alias," Malia declared from the backseat.

"What's an alias? Sasha asked.

"It's a fake name you use when you don't want people to know who you are," Malia explained. "Like 'Johnny McJohn John.'"

Sasha giggled. "Yeah, Daddy, … you should be Johnny McJohn John!"

"And you need to disguise your voice," Malia added. "People recognize it. You have to talk with a higher voice. And faster."

"Daddy talks *so* slow," Sasha said.

"Come on, Daddy," Malia said. "Try it." She shifted into the highest-pitched, fastest voice she could muster, saying, "Hi! I'm Johnny McJohn John!"

Unable to contain himself, Mike burst out laughing. Later, when we got home, Malia proudly explained her scheme to Michelle, who patted her on the head.

"That's a great idea, honey," she said, "but the only way for Daddy to disguise himself is if he has an operation to pin back his ears."

I guess you had to be there. Of his temporary lodging in Washington soon after winning the election, Obama informs readers poised at the edges of their seats:

Malia and Sasha didn't seem to mind being in a hotel. They especially didn't mind their mom's unusually indulgent attitude toward TV watching, bed jumping, and sampling every dessert on the room-service menu. Michelle accompanied them to their first day of school in a Secret Service vehicle. Later, she would tell me how her heart sank as she

watched her precious babies—looking like miniature explorers in their brightly colored coats and backpacks—walking into their new lives surrounded by burly armed men.

At the hotel that night, though, the girls were their usual chattering, irrepressible selves, telling us what a great day they'd had, and how lunch was better than at their old school, and how they had already made a bunch of new friends. As they spoke, I could see the tension on Michelle's face start to lift. When she informed Malia and Sasha that now that school had started, there'd be no more weeknight desserts and TV watching and that it was time to brush their teeth and get ready for bed, I figured things would turn out okay.

Aren't we all just *so* relieved? Of the disastrous BP oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico, Obama reports this critical moment:

Even Sasha came into my bathroom one morning while I was shaving to ask, "Did you plug the hole yet, Daddy?"

Then, there's Obama's broodings while observing his daughters on a family trip:

The two girls were listening to their iPods while thumbing through some of Michelle's magazines, their eyes scanning glossy images of dewy-faced celebrities I didn't recognize. After I waved my hands to get their attention, they took out their earbuds, swiveled their heads in unison toward the window, and nodded wordlessly, pausing for a beat as if to humor me before putting the buds back in their ears. Michelle, who appeared to be dozing to music from her own iPod, offered no comment.

Later, as we sat having dinner at our hotel's outdoor restaurant, we were informed that a heavy fog had settled over … and we might have to cancel the trip…. Malia and Sasha didn't look all that disappointed. I watched as they questioned the waiter about the dessert menu and felt a little bruised by their lack of enthusiasm. With more of my time spent monitoring developments in Libya, I was seeing the family even less on this trip than I did at home, and it compounded my sense—already too frequent of late—that my daughters were growing up faster than I'd expected. Malia was about to be a teenager—her teeth glinting with braces, her hair in a ropy ponytail, her body stretched as if on some invisible rack, so that somehow overnight she'd become long and lean and almost as tall as her mother. At nine, Sasha at least still looked like a kid, with her sweet grin and dimpled cheeks, but I'd noticed a shift in her attitude toward me: She was less inclined to let me tickle her these days; she seemed impatient and a touch embarrassed when I tried to hold her hand in public.

I continued to marvel at how steady the two of them were, how well they'd adapted to the odd and extraordinary circumstances in which they were growing up, gliding seamlessly between audiences with the pope and trips to the mall. Mostly, they were allergic to any special treatment or undue attention, just wanting to be like the other kids at school. (When, on the first day of fourth grade, a classmate had tried to get a photo of Sasha, she had taken it upon herself to snatch the camera, warning that he'd better not try that again.) In fact, both girls vastly preferred hanging out at friends' houses, partly because those households seemed to be less strict about the snacks they ate and the amount of TV they watched, but mainly because it was easier in those places to pretend their lives were normal, even with a Secret Service detail parked on the street outside. And all of this was fine, except for the fact that their lives were never less normal than when they were with me. I couldn't help fearing that I might lose whatever precious time I had with them before they flew the nest.

The reader who's still conscious wins a free copy of *Obama's Family Album, Vol. 49.*

(Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 60 (emphasis in original), 224, 569, 664-65)

457 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 544.

458 *Love Story* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=53Nh3XxBiWg).

459 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 305; Ben Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A memoir of the Obama White House* (New York: 2018), p. xvi ("ten or twenty").

460 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 590. Obama is parroting his senior advisor, David Axelrod, who alleged that, "during those [first] two years, we would pass more meaningful legislation than any new president had in half a century." It's unclear on what basis this comparative ranking was made, but on any reckoning, it would be a stretch to claim Obama's first two years in office were more productive than Bill Clinton's. Of the 2010 midterm elections, Axelrod discordantly recalls, "on Election Night, a few of us gathered in my office to monitor returns, which turned out to be not as bad as had been predicted, but far worse. As state after state reported, Democratic member after Democratic member was swept away, delivering the House to a new tea-flavored Republican majority. In all, sixty-three seats were lost." David Axelrod, *Believer: My forty years in politics* (New York: 2015), pp. 349 ("meaningful"), 426 ("Election").

461 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 619.

462 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 668; Dominic Tierney, "The Legacy of Barack Obama's Worst Mistake," *Atlantic* (15 April 2016) ("shit show"). In all fairness, Bill Clinton no less bombastically claimed credit in his memoir for the airpower he deployed in Bosnia as "the longest-lasting humanitarian mission in history." (Clinton, *My Life*, p. 656)

463 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 648 ("intact"), 650 ("proud," "amazing").

464 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 513-15.

465 His ego given even freer rein after publication of the memoir, Obama did not hesitate to take credit for the fall in unemployment under President Trump as well as preemptively for any successes President Biden might score. Trump "essentially just continued" his policies while Biden was "essentially finishing the job" begun under him. Ezra Klein, "Obama Explains How America Went from 'Yes We Can' to 'Maga,'" *New York Times* (1 June 2021).

466 Every so often, Obama unctuously pretends to humility and modesty. He describes his election to the presidency of *Harvard Law Review* as having "generated a bit of national press" (it was, of course, a huge national event); he depicts himself and Michelle as "homebodies, shying away from glitzy parties and career-advancing soirees" (witness his 60th birthday bash), and Michelle as content "running errands at Target" (her posh jumbo wardrobe while in the White House could have clothed every cis, lesbian, and trans woman in China); he reminiscences how rap music enabled a "connection to something grittier and more real than all the fuss and deference that now surrounded me. It was a way to cut through the artifice and remember who I was" (were he to cut through the artifice, what would remain except an empty suit?). Even his moments of raw self-reflection, when he ponders whether he was fundamentally driven by "vanity," "blind ambition," and "megalomania," come across as staged—that is, designed to preempt the reader's own suspicions by quasi-admitting to these vices in advance. Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 19 ("generated"), 59 ("glitzy"), 71 ("vanity"), 155 (Kabul), 191 ("connection"), 220 (inaugurations), 338 ("displayed"), 358 ("extraordinary"), 474 ("subsidies"), 482 ("transactional"), 483 ("Ming"), 491 ("physicist"), 528 ("plagued"), 558 ("Macondo"), 565

(Mississippi), 602 (BJP), 637 (Arab Spring; see also 641-42), 654 ("Communist"), 658-59 ("plan"), 662 ("imagining"), 685 ("fifty-fifty"); Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 396 ("bell curve," "inflection"). *Mr. Wizard* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Herbert).

467 Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 165-78.

468 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 178 ("yanked," "hemorrhaging," "retrench," "spiking"), 179 ("belly-up" "classic"), 180 ("buckle"), 180-81, 188 and 192 (McCain), 236 ("familiar enough"), 279 ("belly-up"), 293 ("outside"), 334 ("understood"), 493 ("belly-up"), 522 ("belly-up"), 523 ("little about"), 527 ("predictably," "embrace"), 528 ("compact," "skittish"), 549 ("high-flying"), 550 ("derivatives"). The book trashed by Obama was Neil Barofsky's *Bailout: How Washington abandoned Main Street while rescuing Wall Street* (New York: 2013). Barofsky was appointed Special Inspector General to oversee distribution of TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) monies, which were earmarked by Congress for private financial institutions on the brink. He documents that the Obama administration Treasury Department, from Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner on down, prioritized the interests of these financial institutions; that Treasury opposed strict external oversight of how the TARP monies were used; and that, consequently, the distribution of TARP monies was riddled with scandal, corruption, and fraud. On what grounds did Obama dismiss Barofsky's brief? He "knew little about finance." Coincidentally, Barofsky writes that "when the Wall Street lobbyists descend on Capitol Hill to work against regulation that might rein in their ability to earn rapacious profits..., [a] key tactic [of theirs] is to argue that issues related to high finance are so hopelessly complex that it is nearly impossible for mere mortals to understand." If Barofsky was so ignorant of finance, it's hard to figure why he was appointed in the first place to oversee the bailout, and why Obama didn't later just fire him. It's, incidentally, a stretch that Obama, whose knowledge of economics didn't exceed what Summers and Geithner whispered in his ear, can claim to be better informed "about finance" than Barofsky. (Barofsky, *Bailout*, pp. 131, 148, 199)

469 Herewith a representative passage:

> I had some sympathy for the Left's indictment of the status quo. Rather than efficiently allocate capital to productive uses, Wall Street really *did* increasingly function like a trillion-dollar casino, its outsized profits and compensation packages overly dependent on ever-greater leverage and speculation. Its obsession with quarterly earnings *had* warped corporate decision-making and encouraged short-term thinking. Untethered to place, indifferent to the impact of globalization on particular workers and communities, the financial markets had helped accelerate the offshoring of jobs and the concentration of wealth in a handful of cities and economic sectors, leaving huge swaths of the country drained of money, talent, and hope.... But when it came to regulating the nation's *financial* markets to make the system more stable, the Left's prescription missed its mark. The evidence didn't show that limiting the size of U.S. banks would have prevented the recent crisis or the need for federal intervention once the system began to unravel. J.P. Morgan's assets dwarfed those of Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, but it was those smaller firms' highly leveraged bets on securitized subprime mortgages that had set off a panic. The last major U.S. financial crisis, back in the 1980s, hadn't involved big banks at all; instead, the system had been rocked by a deluge of high-risk loans by thousands of small, poorly capitalized regional savings and loan associations (S&Ls) in cities and small towns across the country. Given the scope of their operations, we thought it made sense for regulators

to give mega-banks like Citi or Bank of America extra scrutiny—but cutting their assets in half wouldn't change that. (Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 548; see also pp. 173-74, 526, 529-30)

470 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 336 ("summit"), 526 ("decisive," "suggested"), 529 ("full-court press"), 531 ("leverage"), 553 ("flimsy"). To be sure, President Bill Clinton also lectured European leaders in economic policy. The difference, however, was, he knew what he was talking about. (Clinton, *My Life*, p. 807)

471 Axelrod, *Believer*, pp. 358-59.

472 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 229 ("graceless"), 266 (Yeats), 295 ("quirky"), 335 ("Toulouse-Lautrec"), 341 (Solzhenitsyn).

473 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 367 ("Pyramids"), 444 ("Glory"), 603 ("impulses").

474 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 74, 438, 545 (this last dream sequence seems to have gone on longer than a Cecil B. DeMille extravaganza).

475 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 131; Garrow, *Rising Star*, p. 534.

476 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 598-99; Amnesty International, "*Will I Be Next?*" *U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan* (2013).

477 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 225, 325 (see also pp. xiv, xvi, 218, 439, 533, 598, 669).

478 "Oration of Frederick Douglass Delivered on the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," in Nicholas Buccola (ed), *The Essential Douglass: Selected writings and speeches* (Indianapolis: 2016). Desperate to bolster Obama's record of accomplishment, his acolytes—David Litt, Ben Rhodes, Samantha Power—couple him with the 2015 Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage. The chutzpah is breathtaking as not only did Obama have as much to do with the decision as Vladimir Putin, but he himself vocally opposed same-sex marriage until public opinion swung around and it was politically opportune to support it. Litt is of the opinion that, above and beyond all else, Obama's performance of Amazing Grace in a Charleston church after the murder of Black parishioners had "secured his place in history." Is singing Amazing Grace on a par with signing the Emancipation Proclamation? When Obama sticks it to congressional Republicans who applaud the end of his presidency, by reminding them that he had twice won the election, Litt is in Obamabot heaven: "POTUS was acting positively Lincoln-esque." Is Lincoln remembered for his vain repartees? (Litt, *Thanks*, pp. 255, 283, 286, 301; Rhodes, *World*, p. 317; Samantha Power, *The Education of an Idealist: A memoir* (New York: 2021), p. 281)

479 I know, Blockbuster is no longer around.

480 *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunfight_at_the_O.K._Corral).

481 Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 368-69.

482 Obama purports that he ordered bin Laden's assassination because he believed the threat posed by terrorism had been wildly inflated: "I wanted to remind the world (and, more important, ourselves) that these terrorists were nothing more than a band of deluded, vicious killers—criminals who could be captured, tried, imprisoned, or killed. And there would be no better way of demonstrating that than by taking out bin Laden." But why then did he devote fully 25 pages to this deflationary exercise and confect it into a set piece? (Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 677)

483 *Promised Land*, pp. 676 ("precise," "hunt"), 677 ("absorbed"), 679 ("judgment," "options"),

682 ("nodded"), 683 ("business"), 685 ("Situation Room"), 686 ("morning"), 687 ("Michelle," "stakes"), 688 ("grandfather," "guarantee"), 695 ("softly"), 700-1 (Marine One).

484 Alyssa Mastromonaco, with Lauren Oyler, *Who Thought This Was a Good Idea? And other questions you should have answers to when you work in the White House* (New York: 2018), pp. 2 ("smart"), 49 ("orator"), 131 ("incredibly"), 133 ("very"), 217 ("Good").

485 *If You Go Away* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwGUqx6vngY):

> If you go away on this summer day,
> Then you might as well take the sun away
> ...
> But if you stay, I'll make you a day,
> Like no day has been or will be again.
> ...

486 Here's a sample of Rhodes' self-proclaimed idealism:

> That summer ... began with the spectacle of Edward Snowden releasing a devastating cache of classified information.... There were weeks of drip-drip-drip revelations about U.S. surveillance, the same tactic that would shadow the run-up to our 2016 elections, involving the same people: Russia, Wikileaks. I had to spend my days explaining to our liberal base that Obama wasn't running a surveillance state because of the activities of the N.S.A., which we couldn't really talk about.
> ...
> In August of 2013, Russia granted Edward Snowden asylum in Moscow.
> As a former spy, Putin surely understood the gravity of someone making off with the blueprints for how a nation conducts surveillance. In response, Obama cancelled
> a planned state visit to Moscow.... I also noticed an unusual coziness among the Russians, Snowden, and Wikileaks—the way in which Wikileaks connected with Snowden, who was clearly being monitored by the Russians; the way in which the disclosures coincided largely with Russian interests.... Whoever was behind the disclosures was intent on driving a wedge between the United States and Europe, which also happened to be a key goal of Putin's.

In other words, he's saying that the N.S.A. wasn't spying on Americans, while, wittingly or unwittingly, Snowden—who made real sacrifices for his principles—was a Russian stooge subverting American interests. Ben Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A memoir of the Obama White House* (New York: 2018), pp. 225 ("drip"), 269 ("August").

487 Rhodes, *The World*, pp. xii ("littered"), 12 ("gnawed"), 23 ("worldview"), 47 ("mind meld"), 90 ("anticipate"), 281 ("spat"), 347 ("embalmed"), 374 ("strange"), 402 ("half-empty"); Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 358 ("captured," see also p. 697).

488 Rhodes, *The World*, pp. 77-78 ("standing"), 274 ("drone," "experts"), 291 ("chorus"), 322-23 ("cringed"). If the Rohingya people hadn't suffered enough, just as Burma's brutal repression of them was stepping up, Obama chose this knucklehead as his point man there. Here's Rhodes' deepest insight on Burma: "the actual country was a mystery that eluded easy understanding, with a cosmopolitan capital ready for change, a sprawling countryside where people's lives unfolded out of sight, and a violent periphery where the government held little writ." He could be describing any and every country in the underdeveloped world. It might be wondered why Obama appointed someone to whom Burma "was a mystery" just as it was entering an "uncertain transition" that would culminate in a massive

bloodbath. (Rhodes, *The World*, pp. 217, 221-22)

489 Rhodes, *The World*, pp. 96 ("entire"), 165 ("Jakarta"), 200 ("private"), 228-29 ("eye contact"), 235 ("big idea"). *Ma (He's Making Eyes at Me)* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWYhMyinQ9o):

> Mama!
> Mama, he's making eyes at me.
> Mama, he's awfully nice to me.
> Mama, he's almost breakin' my heart.
> He's beside me.
> Mercy! Let my conscience guide me!
> ...

490 See Rhodes' murky megalomaniacal meditations on his father-in-law's impending death. (*The World*, p. 173)

491 Rhodes, *The World*, pp. 28 ("gift"), 92 ("felt seen"); Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi leadership* (New York: 1970), p. 36.

492 Rhodes, *The World*, pp. 132 ("unique"), 165 ("answer"), 318-320 ("Amazing"), 388 ("swagger"), 389 ("tug").

493 *If I Only Had a Brain* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=nauLgZISozs):

> I could while away the hours
> Conferrin' with the flowers,
> Consulting with the rain.
> And my head I'd be a scratchin'
> While my thoughts are busy hatchin',
> If I only had a brain.
> ...

494 When he was introduced to Litt's parents, Obama commended their son as a "pretty good writer." In fact, he's a superb writer, which no doubt grated on this hyper-competitive narcissistic mediocrity who fashions himself a Proust. Still, Litt doesn't hesitate to soil his muse in order to cultivate his career. He appraises the senior speechwriter in the Obama administration, Jon Favreau ("Favs"), as "one of the most accomplished speechwriters in history." If all of Favs' speeches were piled one on top of the other; and if their combined weight, calculated in units of rhetorical force, was then multiplied a thousand fold, and then exponentially increased to an infinite power; and even if, for good measure, the collective literary output of Obama's legion of other cis-gender-hip-white-bread speechwriters was thrown in after benefiting as well from a compound inflation; still, on a scale, the sum total wouldn't match a random single sentence plucked from Douglass' Fourth of July speech or Lincoln's Second Inaugural—

> *Yet, if God wills that it* [the Civil War] *continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."* (Second Inaugural)

It's a sorry day, indeed, when a Dalton-Yale grad can't discern the difference between that and Favs' fruity bubble-gum. David Litt, *Thanks, Obama: My hopey, changey White House years* (New York: 2017), pp. 168 ("accomplished"), 232 ("pretty good").

495 Litt, *Thanks*, pp. 18 ("zombie"), 63 ("monologue"), 98 ("fly"), 238 ("timing"). Obama's

campaign manager, David Plouffe, desperate as Litt to redeem POTUS, resorts to the same underwhelming praise: "He was the best I had ever seen at nailing a script, or ad-libbing to produce a more effective product." Of the Obamas' respective speech-prep styles, this patronizing woke white liberal observes: "Michelle was a concert pianist—disciplined, regimented, methodical—and Barack was a jazz musician, riffing, improvisational, and playing by ear." Pass the barf-bag, please. (David Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: How Obama won and how we can beat the party of Limbaugh, Beck, and Palin* (New York: 2010), pp. 298, 302)

496 At the end of the book, Litt notes that

> A few [White House staffers]—fewer than you might think—became grandiose. These were the people whose egos ceased to exist except in relation to the Oval. They lost the ability to distinguish between themselves and the president, between petty personal jealousies and weighty national concerns. I don't blame those who came to believe their jobs made them more than human. A demigod complex is the malaria of the D.C. swamp. Still, it was sad to see good people fall victim.

Litt is almost certainly alluding to colossal pea-brain Ben Rhodes, who conspicuously omits Litt's name in his own otherwise exhaustive memoir. Litt, *Thanks*, pp. 103-4 ("rewriting"), 122 ("happened"), 152 ("brilliant"), 232 ("extraordinary"), 277 ("grandiose").

497 *Trouble in the World* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQwlR94AURg):

> Soon it will be done,
> Trouble of the world,
> Trouble of the world,
> Trouble of the world.
> Soon it will be done,
> Trouble of the world,
> Going home, to live with God!
> ...

498 Jarrett's appointment marked the inclusion in the Obama team of "an African American woman to an operation dominated by white men." (Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 328)

499 Valerie Jarrett, *Finding My Voice: When the perfect plan crumbles, the adventure begins* (New York: 2019), pp. 16 ("dead-straight"), 54 ("administrator"), 199 ("one").

500 From Binyamin Appelbaum, "Grim Proving Ground for Obama's Housing Policy," *Boston Globe* (27 June 2008):

> A *Globe* review found that thousands of apartments across Chicago that had been built with local, state, and federal subsidies—including several hundred in Obama's former district—deteriorated so completely that they were no longer habitable. Grove Parc and several other prominent failures were developed and managed by Obama's close friends and political supporters. Those people profited from the subsidies even as many of Obama's constituents suffered. Tenants lost their homes; surrounding neighborhoods were blighted. Some of the residents of Grove Parc say they are angry that Obama did not notice their plight. The development straddles the boundary of Obama's state Senate district. Many of the tenants have been his constituents for more than a decade. "No one should have to live like this, and no one did anything about it," said Cynthia Ashley, who has lived at Grove Parc since 1994.... Among those tied to Obama politically, personally, or professionally are: Valerie Jarrett, a senior adviser to Obama's presidential campaign and a member of his finance committee. Jarrett is the chief executive of Habitat Co., which managed Grove Parc Plaza from 2001 until this winter and co-managed an even

larger subsidized complex in Chicago that was seized by the federal government in 2006, after city inspectors found widespread problems.

501 Litt, *Thanks*, pp. 48-49; Axelrod, *Believer*, p. 190.

502 Jarrett, *Finding,* p. 137 ("Sharpton"). Obama's campaign manager also appraises this Class A shyster as "a reasonable and constructive force." (Plouffe, *Audacity*, p. 125)

503 www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbC81hgJym8

504 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decade of its first century* (New York: 1968), p. 333; David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A biography* (New York: 2009), pp. 391-93.

505 Jarrett, *Finding*, pp. 130 (Martha's Vineyard), 134 (Martha's Vineyard), 170 (Martha's Vineyard), 218 (Martha's Vineyard), and 320 (Martha's Vineyard).

506 *White Christmas* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZO5r_5GmtQ):

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas,
Just like the ones I used to know,
Where the treetops glisten and children listen,
To hear sleigh bells in the snow.

507 Reggie Love, *Power Forward: My presidential education* (New York: 2015), pp. 69 ("talked"), 151 ("Reading," "off chance"), 185 ("understood"), 194 ("brilliant"), 202-3 ("need").

508 *I Will Survive* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZGwHtGBZJU):

At first I was afraid, I was petrified,
Kept thinking I could never live without you by my side.
But then I spent so many nights thinking how you did me wrong,
And I grew strong,
And I learned how to get along.
...

509 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 639.

510 Samantha Power, *The Education of an Idealist: A memoir* (New York: 2019). In passing, be it noted that, whereas Power conscripted enough editors to constitute a battalion in the Soviet Red Army, already on page six it's said of an Irish pub that it was known for its "no-frills *decorum*"!

511 "I, as an immigrant to this country, think that this country is the greatest country on Earth, as I know do you. I would never apologize for America. America is the light to the world," blah blah blah. Power, *Education*, pp. 206 ("immutable"), 340 ("innocence").

512 A typical aside reads: "after the U.N. delegation left the Oval, Obama approached me and asked when I was due. 'I think Barack would make a great name,' he joked." Not so funny for hubby Cass, if the toddler's first words were *Yo, Mama!* (Power, *Education*, p. 227)

513 That is, the "aim" of the libido is "inhibited" as civilization imposes restraints on an individual's ability to promiscuously copulate.

514 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 639.

515 When distraught Ukrainians thank her after she denounced Russia at the U.N.,

Declan asked me what the women were so upset about, so I told him about Putin, searching for terms a five-year-old could understand. "It's like someone entering our apartment, taking two of your favorite stuffed animals from your toy corner, and then saying they used to belong to him," I explained. "How would that feel?" He looked at me with a pained expression and shook his head incredulously as we resumed our walk home.

He's not the only one left with a pained expression. Later on,

> I told Declan that I had made clear [in the U.N.] that just because Putin had big weapons did not mean he could take what belonged to other people. "Did it work, Mommy?" he asked innocently, dipping his French fry in mayonnaise. "Did what work, Dec?" I said. "Did Putin leave Crimea?" he asked. I smiled. Declan, in all his wisdom, was focused on the one result that mattered—not who won the public debate, but whether the aggressor had retreated. My son had brought me down to earth.

At some point a reader is overcome with the queasy feeling, *Shouldn't I be reporting Power for child abuse?* Like POTUS, Power also records her dream sequences (including a "Rated G" one with Obama) in more painstaking detail than a Faulkner novel. Power, *Education*, pp. 411 ("stuffed"), 414 ("mayonnaise").

516 Power, *Education*, pp. 318-319.

517 Power, *Education*, pp. 291 ("speed"), 305 ("fastest"), 394 ("avert"), 440 ("cosponsors").

518 Faithfully imitating Obama, she acclaims the U.S. as it enabled an Irish immigrant like herself to reach dizzying heights of power. Her mother was already a doctor, her father a dentist, and her stepfather a doctor, before alighting on these shores, not exactly an immigrant rags-to-riches story.

519 Her memoir pays tribute to every (safe) liberal cliché: Anne Frank, Dachau, Elie Wiesel, Soviet invasion of Hungary, Prague Spring, Tiananmen massacre, Lech Walesa, fall of the Berlin Wall, Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Milošević, Saddam Hussein, Rwanda, Darfur, Ukraine, etc.—you name it, it's there.

520 To capture the mindset of American planners, Power quotes Charlie Brown from a *Peanuts* cartoon strip: "How can we lose when we're so sincere?" A naïve, fumbling Charlie Brown: isn't that how everyone remembers Kissinger? Power, *Education*, pp. 306 ("sincere"), 399 ("fiercely"), 514 ("millions").

521 In another cowardly locution, she describes the U.S.'s criminal torture of detainees in Guantanamo as "deeply problematic" and "harmful." She recoils in indignation, however, at the use of euphemisms to describe the crimes of other governments—for example, the phrase "difficult and tragic history" to describe the genocide committed by the Ottoman Turks against Armenians. Power, *Education*, pp. 143 ("deeply"), 239 ("difficult"), 466 ("sexism"), 466 ("vast").

522 *Justice League of America* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice_League).

523 *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Girl_from_U.N.C.L.E.).

524 Among the causes she purports to have engaged were averting genocide in Darfur, the Central African Republic, and against the Yazidis in northwestern Iraq; recognition of the Armenian genocide; resettlement of Iraqi and Syrian refugees; independence for South Sudan, and anti-terrorism and democracy promotion in Africa; LGBT rights, opposing sexual violence, empowering women; democratization in Burma; Russian misdeeds in the Ukraine; Ebola in West Africa; freeing political prisoners in Syria; North Korea's nuclear program and human rights abuses, and Iran's human rights abuses. Unsurprisingly, Power vastly exaggerates her savior's role in the events she narrates. See Jean-Philippe Stone, "The Obama Line, Samantha Power, and U.S. Intervention in West Africa during the Ebola Epidemic," *Monthly Review Online* (29 January 2022).

525 See Chapter 1 above.

526 Power, *Education*, pp. 277 ("killing"), 281 ("raise").

527 Power also reckons including a Chinese political prisoner a courageous decision, as the U.S. had "strong ties" with China. As if the U.S. doesn't routinely denounce China's human rights record. Power, *Education*, p. 519 ("credible").

528 Power, *Education*, p. 518 ("exposing").

529 Power, *Education*, pp. 270 ("mastermind"), 272 ("fifteen").

530 The Security Council resolution tabled by the U.S. called for "all necessary measures ... to protect civilians." An earlier British-French draft resolution called only for the imposition of a no-fly zone. Power, *Education,* p. 301 ("mass").

531 Power, *Education*, p. 307 ("confidence").

532 British House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, *Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options* (2016-17), paras. 32-37.

533 "Neither at the time nor presently do I see how we could have ... stood by as Qaddafi followed through on his pledge to retake Benghazi and 'cleanse' people, house by house." (Power, *Education,* p. 307)

534 The British House of Commons report found that the military intervention resulted in "political and economic collapse, inter-militia and inter-tribal warfare, humanitarian and migrant crises, widespread human rights violations, the spread of Gaddafi regime weapons across the region and the growth of ISIL in North Africa."

535 Power, *Education*, p. 309 ("enjoying," "coffee").

536 Power, *Education*, p. 320 ("importance").

537 The U.N. Charter only allows a State to use force in self-defense against an imminent armed attack (Article 51).

538 The 1973 War Powers Act, requiring Congressional authorization when troops are deployed abroad, was passed in the wake of the Vietnam War to curb unchecked presidential power.

539 Power, *Education*, p. 379 ("Earth"); Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *Atlantic* (April 2016) ("slam-dunk").

540 "I could not shake the concern that the Council was implicitly licensing other kinds of attacks on civilians. After all, because Russia refused to include [in the resolution] references to SCUD missiles, artillery, barrel bombs, and even napalm, the resolution was silent on Assad's other murderous weapons ... we could not pretend it was remotely enough." (Power, *Education*, p. 389)

541 At the end of her memoir, Power speculates on various half-measures—"air-dropping food parcels to besieged civilians," "increasing our support for the Syrian military opposition," "creating a no-fly zone over select areas of Syria"—but she also concedes that "this escalation could have taken the United States down the very 'slippery slope' that all of us sought to avoid, miring our troops in a regional conflagration with Russia on the other side of the line." Power, *Education*, pp. 506 ("air-dropping," "increasing"), 507 ("creating"), 514 ("escalation").

542 Elsewhere, Power more precisely lays out when humility was in order: "I believed that making—and criticizing—*U.S.* foreign policy should be done with humility" (my emphasis).

Power, *Education*, pp. 508 ("making"), 551 ("militarization"), 553 ("judgments").

543 Amnesty International, "*Will I Be Next?*" *U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan* (2013); *Joint Letter to President Obama regarding "Targeted Killings" and Drone Strikes* (13 May 2015). The letter's signatories included Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the American Civil Liberties Union. According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, "There were ten times more air strikes in the covert war on terror during President Barack Obama's presidency than under his predecessor, George W. Bush." In Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia combined—but excluding Afghanistan—total deaths by drones during the Obama years ranged from 3,000-4,500, civilian deaths from 400-800, and child deaths from 100-120. (*Obama's Covert Drone War in Numbers*, 17 January 2017; www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-17/obamas-covert-drone-war-in-numbers-ten-times-more-strikes-than-bush)

544 Power, *Education*, pp. 291 ("crackdown"), 487 ("blind"), 508 ("horrors").

545 Michael R. Gordon and Kareem Fahim, "Kerry Says Egypt was 'Restoring Democracy' in Ousting Morsi," *New York Times* (1 August 2013); Human Rights Watch, *All According to Plan: The Rab'a massacre and mass killings of protesters in Egypt* (2014); Human Rights Watch, *Year of Abuses under al-Sisi* (2015); Human Rights Watch, *World Report* (2015).

546 It has been reported that, after the coup, Power favored making U.S. provision of weapons to Sisi conditional on improvements in his human rights record. Michael Crowley, "'We Caved,'" *Politico* (January/February 2016). Power makes no mention of this contingency in her memoir.

547 The 2008 Child Soldiers Prevention Act curtails U.S. military assistance, licenses and sales to governments that recruit or use child soldiers. Amnesty International, "New Evidence Challenges Coalition's Denial It Used Cluster Munitions in Recent Attack" (15 January 2016); Amnesty International, "Children among Civilians Killed and Maimed in Cluster Bomb 'Minefields'" (23 May 2016); *Amnesty International Report 2016-17* (Yemen); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016* (for events in 2015; Yemen); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2017* (for events in 2016; Yemen); Human Rights Watch, "Stop Providing Cluster Munitions" (2 June 2016); *Letter Dated 22 January 2016 from the Panel of Experts on Yemen Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2140 (2014) Addressed to the President of the Security Council*.

548 Norman G. Finkelstein, *Gaza: An inquest in its martyrdom* (Oakland: 2018), *passim*. Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon's war against the Palestinians* (New York: 2003), p. 169 ("concentration camp").

549 United Nations Security Council, 18 July 2014, 22 July 2014. For Power's verbal evasions of Israeli culpability, see also United Nations General Assembly, 30 December 2014, where she refers to the devastation wrought by Protective Edge as "the human consequences of ensuing cycles of violence." For Power's condemnations of Hamas crimes, see also United Nations Security Council, 20 January 2014, 29 April 2014, and 15 September 2016.

550 Power, *Education*, p. 417 ("composure"); Barak Ravid, "Samantha Power, Israel's Unlikely Line of Defense," *Haaretz* (16 June 2013); Colum Lynch, "Israel's Shield," *Foreign Policy* (1 June 2015).

551 United Nations Security Council, 23 December 2016. Power was speaking to a Security

Council resolution condemning Israeli settlement activity that, for the first time, she did not veto but instead abstained from.

552 Power, *Education*, p. 468.

553 Power, *Education*, p. 514.

554 Under international and domestic U.S. law, it is illegal to supply weapons to a state that is an egregious violator of human rights.

555 United Nations Security Council (10 January 2017).

556 "[T]he less we engage in diplomacy, the more chaotic the world becomes." Power, *Education*, p. 552.

557 United Nations General Assembly (2 February 2015).

558 A full record of Power's U.N. speeches can be found here: digitallibrary.un.org/search?ln=en&cc=Speeches&p=Samantha+power&f=&rm=&ln=en&sf=&so=d&rg=50&c=United+Nations+Digital+Library+System&c=&of=hb&fti=0&fti=0

559 In most of these speeches, Power devoted the bulk of her remarks to denouncing the Assad regime and Russian support of it. She never missed an opportunity, however tangential, to excoriate the Syrian regime, so some of the referenced speeches include only passing jabs at Assad. *UNSC Sessions*: 22 October 2013; 20 January 2014; 29 January 2014; 22 February 2014; 7 March 2014; 16 April 2014; 25 April 2014; 29 April 2014; 22 May 2014; 14 July 2014; 22 July 2014; 21 October 2014; 15 January 2015; 12 February 2015; 23 February 2015; 26 February 2015; 6 March 2015; 21 April 2015; 24 April 2015; 23 July 2015; 9 October 2015; 22 October 2015; 7 August 2015; 17 November 2015; 19 January 2016; 26 January 2016; 26 February 2016; 4 May 2016; 27 May 2016; 12 July 2016; 25 July 2016; 15 September 2016; 25 September 2016; 21 November 2016; 30 November 2016; 13 December 2016; 10 January 2017.

560 A Security Council speech by Power on 14 April 2015 condemned Houthi "actions [that] have caused widespread violence and instability that threaten the security and welfare of the Yemeni people." A Security Council speech by Power on 22 December 2015 noted that "the lack of trust among the parties … is understandable, particularly after the Houthis violated one agreement after another in their military push southward." This same speech stated that the Houthis "must stop any and all indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, … and they must halt their cross-border attacks," while it only "urge[s] the Saudi-led coalition to ensure lawful and discriminate targeting and to thoroughly investigate all credible allegations of civilian casualties, and make adjustments as needed to avoid such incidents." A Security Council speech by Power on 31 October 2016 "condemns … in the strongest terms" a Houthi missile attack against Saudi Arabia, as well as Houthi shelling of "populated areas." This same speech also asserted that "air strikes that hit schools, hospitals and other civilian objects have to stop.... The United States strongly condemns the air strike on mourners at a reception hall.... The strike left 140 mourners dead and more than 600 injured." Power did not, however, name the perpetrator of these "air strikes," while per the large-scale massacre of mourners, she stated, "The coalition has accepted responsibility, and we look forward to further reporting on their investigation of the attack."

561 I discuss Power's explicit condemnation of Hamas attacks targeting Israel in the text

above.

562 Power, *Education*, p. 540.

563 *Sinnerman* (www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH3Fx41Jpl4):

Oh, sinnerman, where you gonna run to?
Sinnerman, where you gonna run to?
Where you gonna run to?
All on that day.
I got to run to the rock,
Please hide me, I run to the rock,
...
But the rock cried out,
I can't hide you, the rock cried out,
I can't hide you, the rock cried out,
I ain't gonna hide you there.
All on that day.
...

564 Garrow, *Rising Star*, pp. 1067, 1069.

565 Obama, *Promised Land*, p. 692.

566 "There can be no doubt," Leon Trotsky once observed, "that at the crucial moment, the leaders of the Social Democracy will prefer the triumph of fascism to the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." Substitute Democratic Party for Social Democracy, Republican Party for "fascism," Bernie Sanders' insurgency for the "revolutionary..." and—voila!—you have the present dynamic. (Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (New York: 1971), p. 70)

567 Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: 2019), p. 197.

568 Trotsky said of such radical sounding slogans divorced from political reality that, "if you have not even a bridge to them, not even a road to the bridge, nor a footpath to the road," then they amount to a "fetish ... a religious myth. Mythology serves people as a cover for their own weakness or at best as a consolation." (Trotsky, *Struggle*, pp. 86-87)

569 Sean Campbell, "The BLM Mystery: Where did the money go?," *New York* (31 January 2022); Nyam Daniel, "California DOJ Targets a Leaderless BLM Global Network for Missing Tax Documents," *Atlanta Black Star* (7 February 2022); Sean Campbell, "Black Lives Matter Secretly Bought a $6 Million House," *New York* (4 April 2022).

570 *DN!* is a "safe space" for the most scrofulous characters in woke culture. Even as Patrisse Cullors was publicly disgraced after her multimillion dollar real estate buying spree, she was still featured as an immaculate social justice warrior on the program (31 January 2022; democracynow.org/2022/1/31/patrisse_cullors_an_abolitionists_handbook). For un-woke non-enabler-of-crooks programming, see Briahna Joy Gray's *Bad Faith*, "Did Black Lives Matter Leaders Cash In on a Movement?" (10 February 2022; www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1jzbfLzAiI).

571 See Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious scholarship and the Palestinian question* (New York: 1988), pp. 23-31, and Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, second edition (New York, 2003), pp. 21-22, 45-50.

572 Omer Bartov, "A Tale of Two Holocausts," *New York Times Book Review* (6 August 2000).

573 Omer Bartov, "Did Punch Cards Fuel the Holocaust?," *Newsday* (24 March 2001).

574 James W. Gerard, "A Hymn of Hate," *New York Times* (15 October 1933; https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1996/10/06/631345.html?pageNumber=NaN).

575 This wasn't the first time, nor would it be the last, that Professor Hilberg came to my rescue. In 1996, Harvard professor Daniel Jonah Goldhagen published *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, which became an instant national bestseller and catapulted its author to academic superstardom. It was Goldhagen's thesis that "the central causal agent of the Holocaust" was the German people's deeply entrenched homicidal hatred of Jews. I published a long critical essay, later republished in a coauthored book, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen thesis and historical truth* (with Ruth Bettina Birn), demonstrating that Goldhagen's scholarship was shoddy and his logic contorted. Hilberg (who deemed Goldhagen's tome "worthless"), alongside many leading lights in Holocaust Studies and the historical profession, such as Christopher Browning, Ian Kershaw, Eric Hobsbawm and Arno Mayer, endorsed *A Nation on Trial*. The Holocaust industry was none too pleased that a book coauthored by me garnered such prestigious backing. In order to neutralize this inconvenient fact, a review in *Slate* magazine brazenly alleged that the blurbs by Hilberg et al. "appear to be more the expressions of well-wishers than of close readers." I was privately informed that this hit-job had been ordered by an editor at *Slate*, Judith Shulevitz, who is currently a contributing op-ed writer for the *New York Times*.

576 https://www.normanfinkelstein.com/how-the-adl-fights-anti-semitism/

577 The back cover was graced with glowing endorsements from leading scholars, such as Sara Roy of Harvard, Avi Shlaim of Oxford, and Baruch Kimmerling of Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

578 Jon Wiener, "Giving Chutzpah New Meaning," *The Nation* (11 July 2005).

579 The paperback version of *Beyond Chutzpah* (2008) contained a lengthy Epilogue by Frank J. Menetrez ("Dershowitz v. Finkelstein: Who's right and who's wrong?") independently corroborating the plagiarism charge. Menetrez currently serves as an Associate Justice on the California Court of Appeal. For the "painful surgery" quote, see web.archive.org/web/20080604214612/http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=11&ar=1287

580 It posted (but didn't include in its print edition) an article I coauthored with two other writers in 2015, and it published a brief commentary by me in 2016.

581 Jon Wiener, "The Chutzpah Industry," *The Nation* (2 May 2007). My former personal editor, who was long established at *The Nation* and so could have vouched on my behalf that these were damnable lies, prudently left me out to dry. Back in the day, Leon Trotsky seethed after being traduced by them, "what an infamous reptile breed these radicals of *The Nation*!" (*Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940* (New York: 1977), p. 292)

582 Norman G. Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the misuse of anti-Semitism and the abuse of history*, updated paperback edition with a new preface (Berkeley: 2008), p. xxxix n84.

583 See Conclusion to Part II below.

584 *The Nation*, "In Fact…" (24 January 2002). Neuborne put in for an additional $1 million in

legal fees for his "pro bono" labors, but after extensive litigation it was denied him. *In re Holocaust Victim Assets* Litig, United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York (6 December 2007). In a bewildering personal footnote to this vampire diary, Neuborne's attorney in the legal fees litigation was Samuel Issacharoff, currently a law professor at N.Y.U. I was a close friend of Sam's in college when he was a member of the lunatic Trotskyist sect known as the Spartacists. (He would later head up the Spartacist Youth League.) Comrade Sam was given back then to denouncing everyone else on the Left, including yours truly (a mere Maoist), as petty bourgeois. A half century later, this once-upon-a-time Trotsky wannabe had metamorphosed into a Holocaust-huckster-one-step-removed, as he collected his attorney fees from Lead Vampire Counsel Burt Neuborne, who paid out Sam from his own attorney fees, that in turn were deducted from the monies earmarked for "needy Holocaust victims." Was this Trotsky's "permanent revolution" or permanent devolution?

585 *Middle East Policy* (19 September 2018).

586 https://academicinfluence.com/search?query=norman+finkelstein *Wikipedia*'s list of James Madison High School's "notable alumni" includes Senators Chuck Schumer, Bernie Sanders, and Norm Coleman; Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and "Judge Judy"; Nobel laureates Arthur Ashkin, Gary Becker, Stanley Cohen, Martin Lewis Perl, and Robert Solow; and "Norman Finkelstein (born 1953) political scientist, activist, professor, author." (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison_High_School_(Brooklyn)

587 My standard speaking fee was: "Do the best you can, keeping in mind that I am permanently unemployed." I was usually paid $500-1,000, sometimes a little more, sometimes zero. The standard honorarium of a leftist "superstar" is around $20,000. Once, while I was on a speaking tour in Kerala, India, the local activist group sponsoring me and operating on a pauper's budget expressed astonishment, as it brought up her email on a computer screen, that Naomi Klein had demanded nothing less than $25,000 plus a round-trip first-class airline ticket.

588 Having criticized the cult-like Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, I am also no longer called upon to speak by Palestine solidarity groups.

589 Bill Ayers was a leader of the Weather Underground and a Black Panther groupie. He's since reinvented himself as an "educator" in Chicago's woke Hyde Park community. He once guilt-tripped my class of mostly middle-class white students (at DePaul University) on their "white-skin privilege." If he himself was exempted from this scolding, that's because he was woke. (Lest there be doubt, this balding 62-year-old sported a gold stud in his earlobe.) It was a rich performance coming from the son of the president, C.E.O., and chairman of Commonwealth Edison. In his memoir, Ayers grooves on the many successful "bombing" missions carried out by his flaky sect. If this spoiled brat never spent a night in jail after his playground romp-cum-tantrum, it was almost certainly because Big Daddy pulled strings. If he omitted mention of his white-*class* privilege, that's perhaps because he couldn't then talk down to everyone else. Ayers also exalts Barack Obama as "transcendent," "brilliant," "the smartest guy in any room he walks into. Including the U.S. Senate," "kind and sturdy and compassionate," "steady and cool," "super-smart, personable, compassionate, and decent in a thousand ways," "positively Lincolnesque"....

It's quite the sight to watch this ultra-radical metamorphose into a pathetic groveling lickspittle of power. Even were Obama so brilliant, how would Ayers of all people know it? Consider his historico-philosophical vision. During Obama's first presidential run, Ayers' name was dragged into the national news cycle by rightwing media for a couple of weeks as he and Obama had been friends of sorts in Chicago. His fifteen minutes of fame was a blip on the screen except in Ayers' febrile imagination where it constituted—brace yourself!—"a world historical event." In his presidential memoir, Obama dedicated one-and-a-half sentences in the 700 pages to this "event" and its fallout. Its significance ranked right up there with Tiny Tim's televised wedding with Miss Vicki (youtube.com/watch?v=v8gloxeHOLk). (Bill Ayers, *Public Enemy* (Boston: 2013), pp. 4, 5, 147, 158, 178, 191, 223; Edward McClelland, *Young Mr. Obama: Chicago and the making of a Black president* (New York: 2010), p. 94; Obama, *Promised Land*, pp. 194, 674)

590 Adam Gabbatt, "Gloria Steinem: Women are supporting Bernie Sanders 'for the boys,'" *Guardian* (6 February 2016).

591 "Ava DuVernay Interviews Angela Davis on This Moment," *Vanity Fair* (September 2020); Nelson George, "Angela Davis Still Believes America Can Change," *New York Times Magazine* (19 October 2020); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "'Hell, Yes, We Are Subversives,'" *New York Review of Books* (22 September 2022).

592 www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiteFqDG758; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtN5bYZ0_NI

593 Priya Elan, "Civil Rights Activist Angela Davis Launches Fashion Collaboration with LA Label," *Guardian* (15 December 2020).

594 www.democracynow.org/2016/3/28/angela_davis_on_the_fascist_appeal; www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MzmifPGk94 (at 38:00; woke "philosopher" Judith Butler can be seen enthusiastically agreeing).

595 www.democracynow.org/shows/2020/3/6

596 The refreshingly cant-free young historian, Touré Reed, recently confessed that he would be quite pleased if unto his dying day he never again heard the locution *white privilege*.

597 Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (New York: 1971), p. 300.

598 Ezra Klein, "An Unusually Optimistic Conversation with Bernie Sanders," *New York Times* (23 March 2021).

599 V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The highest stage of capitalism* (1917); Eric Hobsbawm, "Lenin and the 'Aristocracy of Labor,'" *Monthly Review* (December 2012).

600 From *Reuters* (29 February 2020):

> A majority of voters surveyed by Edison said U.S. Representative Jim Clyburn's endorsement of Biden on Wednesday was an important factor in their decision....
>
> Heading into South Carolina, Biden was on the ropes after poor showings in the Iowa and Nevada caucuses and the New Hampshire primary. A Reuters/Ipsos national poll this week showed the former vice president—often seen as having the greatest appeal among black voters—lagging rival U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont for the first time among that group.
>
> In South Carolina, though, he won 61% of African Americans, who make up more than half the Southern state's Democratic electorate. Only 16% supported Sanders, who came into Saturday's contest with a lead in convention delegates.

In the Edison poll, 61% said the endorsement from Clyburn, who has represented South Carolina for nearly three decades, was an important factor in their decision, including 27% who said it was "the most important factor."

601 "He had struck down my personality, had subjected me to his will, made property of my body and soul, reduced me to a chattel, hired me out to a noted slave-breaker to be worked like a beast and flogged into submission; he had taken my hard earnings, sent me to prison, offered me for sale, broken up my Sunday-school, forbidden me to teach my fellow slaves to read on pain of nine and thirty lashes on my bare back; he had sold my body to his brother Hugh, had pocketed the price of my flesh and blood without any apparent disturbance of his conscience."

602 The one exception was the shame Jews felt at their physical feebleness, encapsulated in the self-taunt that they "went like sheep to slaughter" during the Nazi holocaust. Hence, the exaggerated pride they felt at the Israeli army, which showed the Goyim that Jews, too, could be fighters.

603 On a related note, the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, enshrining the "separate but equal" doctrine, notoriously asserted that "laws permitting, and even requiring, the separation [of races] ... do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other," and that "the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority" emerges not from "anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it." In other words, if the "colored race" felt inferior under Jim Crow, it was a problem of their own, not the law's, making. The 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, effectively reversing *Plessy* and widely heralded as the most enlightened decision in the Court's annals, contrarily asserted that "to separate [Negro students] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community." (The psychosocial evidence cited in *Brown* to sustain this sweeping conclusion was highly problematic. J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and school integration* (New York: 1976), pp. 31-34.) A juxtaposition of the historical experience of Jews and Blacks, respectively, suggests, however, that *Plessy* was not entirely wrong and *Brown* not entirely right.

604 www.cde.ca.gov/be/cc/cd/documents/esmcch1intro-overview.docx

605 "Woman is made to submit to man and to endure even injustice."

606 "There is no social function peculiar to women."

607 "I am not so shocked by savages who roast and eat the bodies of their dead as by those who torture and persecute the living."

608 "Its people were in no sense inferiors in natural clarity of understanding and cogency"; "the astonishing magnificence of the cities of Cuzco and Mexico"; "the beauty of their workmanship."

609 "So many towns razed to the ground, so many nations exterminated, so many millions put to the sword, and the richest and fairest part of the world turned upside down for the benefit of the pearl and pepper trades!"

610 "The Americans are like unenlightened children, living from one day to the next, and untouched by higher thoughts or aspirations"; "the negro is an example of animal man in

all his savagery and lawlessness."

611 "Subjection of the natives, incitement of various nations to widespread wars among themselves, famine, rebellion, treachery, and the entire litany of evils that can afflict the human race."

612 Whereas the advent of money modifies, for Locke, these principles, it does not annul them, as the examples I present in the text illustrate.

613 See Chapter 7 below.

614 Shakur's major lifetime achievement was allegedly killing a police officer in a shootout, while Seale's post-Panthers career highlights comprised advertising for *Ben & Jerry's* ice cream and authoring a cookbook (*Barbecue'n with Bobby*).

615 Kendi is apparently unaware that significant passages of Haley's *Roots* were plagiarized from a book by a white dude. Acknowledging the malfeasance, Haley paid out $650,000 in damages in 1978.

616 I often urged (without success) an enterprising student to start up a line of shirts—*SmarTees*—quoting memorable lines from the classics. Herewith a sample:

What is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?—Socrates.

That so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time—Mill.

Faith attached to ideas half-understood is the main source of fanaticism—Rousseau.

Twice two is four is not life but the beginning of death—Dostoyevsky.

An unjust law is no law at all—St. Augustine.

Upon the most exalted throne in the world it is still our own bottom that we sit on—Montaigne.

One can make this generalization about men: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers, they shun danger and are greedy for profit—Machiavelli.

Compulsory physical exercise does no harm to the body, but compulsory learning never sticks to the mind—Plato.

Sapere aude! *Have the courage to think for yourself!*—Kant.

The tyrant is very ready to make war, for this keeps his subjects occupied and in continued need of a leader—Aristotle.

It is the inferior artist only, who is ever perfectly satisfied with his own performances—A. Smith.

There is no greatness where there is no simplicity, goodness, and truth—Tolstoy.

617 Rubinstein edited a wonderful volume on the 1968 teachers strike, *Schools against Children: The case for community control* (New York: 1971). I am duty bound to also report that, whereas Rubinstein acquitted herself with absolute integrity towards Arabs on a personal level, her opinions, although better than those of the American Jewish community at large, could be most disappointing when it came to the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

618 It's hard not to notice the comparison with the geriatric Brooklyn-born Jewish socialist who much later emerged as the standard-bearer of the multiethnic millennials of our working class.

619 Although he conceived that a combination of social controls and education could curb the lust for things, More was of the opinion that this desire, rooted in "that one only beast, the princess and mother of all mischief, *Pride*," ran so deep in human nature that it could not be fully exorcised. It was the essence of pride, according to More, that it

> measureth not wealth and prosperity by her own commodities, but by the misery and incommodities of other; she would not by her good will be made a goddess if there were no wretches left over whom she might like a scornful lady rule and triumph, over whose

miseries her felicities might shine, whose poverty she might vex, torment, and increase by gorgeously setting forth her riches. This hell hound creepeth into men's hearts and plucketh them back from entering the right path of life, and is so deeply rooted in men's breasts, that she cannot be plucked out. (*Utopia*)

620 Indeed, Marx posited that the capitalist—whipped by the system to yield ever greater profits—"is just as enslaved by the relationships of capitalism as is his opposite pole, the worker, albeit in a quite different manner." (Appendix to volume one of *Capital*, "Results of the Immediate Process of Production") It's unresolved in Marx whether workers' alienation can be reduced if the end of their labor is meeting basic material needs—"the realm of necessity"—or whether only "beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however can blossom forth only with the realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working days is its basic requisite." (*Capital*, volume three, chapter 48, "The Trinity Formula") In other words, can work performed to pay the bills be personally gratifying as well or can it only be truly gratifying if it's freely chosen (akin to a hobby) and not coerced by the whip of necessity? Dubious of the inherent worth of labor, Marx's contemporary (and nemesis of sorts), John Stuart Mill, came close to Marx's formulation in *Capital* just quoted: "In opposition to the 'gospel of work,' I would assert the gospel of leisure, and maintain that human beings cannot rise to the finer attributes of their nature compatibly with a life filled with labor.... To reduce very greatly the quantity of work required to carry on existence is as needful as to distribute it more equally." (Letter, 1850) In a Marxist classic of my generation, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*: *The degradation of work in the twentieth century*, Harry Braverman posited that "necessary" labor can simultaneously be spiritually rewarding, albeit not under capitalism but only under a socialist system that radically restructures the labor process.

621 "We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old" (from the union hymn "Solidarity Forever").

622 The famous slogan of the French student uprising in 1968 echoed Weber: "Be realistic. Demand the impossible!"

623 Du Bois was thus skeptical, for most of his life, of the Communist dogma that white workers could be won over to a platform of class solidarity supporting Black equality.

624 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An essay toward an autobiography of a race concept* (New York: 2007), p. 99. When Du Bois met Mao Tse-tung in 1959, "the Chairman presumed to explain at some length the 'diseased psychology' affecting the American Negro, [but] Du Bois interjected to say that Negroes and the working people of his country were not afflicted by a psychological condition but by their lack of income." (David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A biography* (New York: 2009), p. 706)

625 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decade of its first century* (New York: 1968), p. 333; Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois,* p. 699.

626 Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King years, 1954-63* (New York: 1988), p. 213.

627 "shiksa n. *Offensive.* Used as a disparaging term for a non-Jewish girl or woman." (*American Heritage* dictionary)

628 "goy n. *Often Offensive.* A non-Jewish person." (*American Heritage* dictionary)

629 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* (New York: 1965).

630 Ron H. Feldman (ed.), *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish identity and politics in the modern age* (New York, 1978), pp. 241-47.

631 Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (*La Trahison des Clercs*) (New York, 1969), p. 183:

> Indeed, if we ask ourselves what will happen to a humanity where every group is striving more eagerly than ever to feel conscious of its own particular interests, and makes its moralists tell it that it is sublime to the extent that it knows no law but this interest—a child can give the answer. This humanity is heading for the greatest and most perfect war ever seen in the world, whether it is a war of nations, or a war of classes.

632 Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective* (1784):

> Nature does nothing in vain, and in the use of means to her goals she is not prodigal. Her giving to man reason and the freedom of the will which depends upon it is clear indication of her purpose. Man accordingly was not to be guided by instinct, not nurtured and instructed with ready-made knowledge; rather, he should bring forth everything out of his own resources. Securing his own food, shelter, safety and defense (for which Nature gave him neither the horns of the bull, nor the claws of the lion, nor the fangs of the dog, but hands only), all amusement which can make life pleasant, insight and intelligence, finally even goodness of heart—all this should be wholly his own work. In this, Nature seems to have moved with the strictest parsimony, and to have measured her animal gifts precisely to the most stringent needs of a beginning existence, just as if she had willed that, if man ever did advance from the lowest barbarity to the highest skill and mental perfection and thereby worked himself up to happiness (so far as it is possible on earth), he alone should have the credit and should have only himself to thank—exactly as if she aimed more at his rational self-esteem than at his well-being.

633 Du Bois, *Autobiography*, pp. 390-95.

634 Except about the fate of her immediate family, of which she never uttered a single word; likewise, my Father. So consumed was my Mother by anger, I could never be certain how accurate a witness she was. Later in life, I was gratified to discover that virtually everything she told me was confirmed in other first-hand accounts of the Nazi holocaust. I would note in particular Bernard Goldstein's *Five Years in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Edinburgh: 2005) and Yitzhak Zuckerman's *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: 1993).

635 It has often been said in extenuation of the Jewish collaborators that they had no choice. But my Mother would indignantly retort, "They could have thrown off their uniforms and joined the rest of us." Imagine my surprise when I came across this line in Zuckerman's memoir: "There's a supposedly 'legal' argument that anyone who didn't follow orders was threatened with death. But what danger faced the police force? At most, what happened to all Jews?"

636 "The employees of the Judenrat, however, had accepted the shameful job. Now I watched them run with the pack—hounds pursuing their own brothers, even their own parents." (Goldstein).

637 When asked why she didn't settle in Israel after the war, my Mother quipped: "I had enough of Jewish leaders!"

638 It stood for 13 Leshno Street, where they were headquartered.

639 The classic account is Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of*

Academic Freedom in the United States (New York: 1955; "ward" at p. 114). The landmark battles to emancipate American higher education from clerical authority unfolded during the Darwinian revolution in the late nineteenth century, and from corporate authority as labor organized at the turn of the century. Broadly speaking, the scientific revolution brought home the desiderata of professional competence and freedom of inquiry, while the juggernaut of "Big Business" brought into sharp relief the precarious employment of an academic wedded to radical causes (ibid., chaps. vii and ix). On the anticommunist witch-hunt in the academy, see Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the universities* (Oxford: 1986).

640 Robert C. Post, *Democracy, Expertise, Academic Freedom: A First Amendment jurisprudence for the modern state* (New Haven: 2012), p. 9; see also ibid., pp. 44, 67, and Matthew W. Finkin and Robert C. Post, *For the Common Good: Principles of American academic freedom* (New Haven: 2009), p. 39.

641 Whereas the notion of academic freedom is not set in stone, some iterations of it plainly lack coherence. To justify an academic boycott of Israel, Judith Butler recasts academic freedom to include the preconditions of its realization such as physical access to institutions of higher education. Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement in the occupied Palestinian territories (roadblocks, checkpoints, closure) thus violate academic freedom. The motive behind this rhetorical move is transparent: on the one hand, academic freedom is a sacrosanct principle in the U.S. academy, the violation of which evokes a much greater hue and cry than the breach of freedom of movement; on the other hand, an academic boycott prima facie violates academic freedom. To promote her political agenda, Butler recasts academic freedom so that a boycott is no longer a violation of Israeli academic freedom but, on the contrary, a nonviolent tactic to defend Palestinian academic freedom against Israeli transgression of it. If, however, academic freedom is to include the prerequisites to its realization, then basic natural resources should also be included: one can't pursue higher education in the absence of air and water. Should the U.S. Clean Air Act and U.S. Clean Water Act then be construed as victories for academic freedom? Butler is, of course, right to deplore Israel's restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement. But these policies, egregious as they are, have precious little to do with academic freedom, which denotes a relatively distinct set of concepts and practices. To broaden its meaning might be politically expedient, but the price is intellectual coherence: academic freedom presupposes but is not reducible to other rights. (Judith Butler, "Exercising Rights: Academic freedom and boycott politics," in Akeel Bilgrami and Jonathan Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?* (New York: 2015), pp. 293-315) Incidentally, although Butler claims hers is a novel interpretation of academic freedom, the youthful Angela Davis anticipated Butler's argument during her academic freedom battle at U.C.L.A., when she belonged to the Communist Party: "all economic and social conditions which adversely affect the quality of education experienced by minority groups in our society are violations of academic freedom." This was Communist boilerplate, the manifest purpose of which was to deflect criticism of the U.S.S.R.'s comprehensive lack of academic freedom. For Davis' case, see Chapter 8 below.

642 The A.A.U.P.'s stated mission is

to advance academic freedom and shared governance; to define fundamental professional values and standards for higher education; to promote the economic security of faculty, academic professionals, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and all those engaged in teaching and research in higher education; to help the higher education community organize to make our goals a reality; and to ensure higher education's contribution to the common good.

643 Compare John Stuart Mill: "the end of education is not to *teach*, but to fit the mind for learning from its own consciousness and observation." ("On Genius" (1832); emphasis in original)

644 Akeel Bilgrami, "Truth, Balance, and Freedom," in Akeel Bilgrami and Jonathan Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?* (New York: 2015), pp. 16, 23. He locates this argument in a larger claim. According to him, Mill is being "outright incoherent" in urging the pursuit of truth while at the same time stipulating that one can never be certain of having attained it: "You cannot strive to achieve what you know to be impossible" (p. 15). This argument puzzles on several levels. First, if human reason is fallible, and if truth is a fundamental value, then mustn't some allocation always be made to the possibility of error in the necessary search for truth? If, conversely, a coherent belief in truth requires absolute certitude, then, wouldn't the price of pursuing it be irrationality and fanaticism? Furthermore, it's hard to make out the incoherence in aspiring to a goal even if its full realization might be beyond reach. One would think that's a commonplace in personal life ("I want to play the violin like Jascha Heifetz") and political movements ("We aspire to abolish all forms of violence"). Even if a moral imperative couldn't be fully realized, Immanuel Kant contended in his *Metaphysics of Morals*, one still had a duty to act as if it could be:

> So the question is no longer whether perpetual peace is something real or a fiction, and whether we are not deceiving ourselves in our theoretical judgment when we assume that it is real. Instead, we must act as if it is something real, though perhaps it is not; we must work toward establishing perpetual peace and the kind of constitution that seems to us most conducive to it…. And even if the complete realization of this objective always remains a pious wish, still, we are certainly not deceiving ourselves in adopting the maxim of working incessantly towards it. For this is our duty, and to admit that the moral law within us is itself defective would call forth in us the wish, which arouses our abhorrence, rather to be rid of all reason and to regard ourselves as thrown by one's principles into the same mechanism of nature as all the other species of animals.

Mill's argument, which isn't nearly as "careless" and "bizarre" as Bilgrami purports (pp. 13, 23), anticipated Bilgrami's objection, and his reply also seems convincing, albeit in a different register than Kant's. An opinion, he wrote, merits deference and is ripe to be acted on not because it necessarily *is* the truth but, rather, because the person espousing it has made a good-faith effort to reach truth by mentally wrestling with all contenders:

> In the case of any person whose judgment is really deserving of confidence, how has it become so? Because he has kept his mind open to criticism of his opinions and conduct, because it has been his practice to listen to all that could be said against him; to profit by as much of it as was just, and to expound to himself, and upon occasion to others, the fallacy of what was fallacious. Because he has felt that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject is by hearing what can

be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this; nor is it in the nature of human intellect to become wise in any other manner.

645 I am not qualified to comment on mathematical truths, which apparently differ in nature. Mill, for example, asserts that

> on a subject like mathematics,…there is nothing at all to be said on the wrong side of the question. The peculiarity of the evidence of mathematical truths is, that all the argument is on one side. There are no objections, and no answers to objections.

646 A concrete analysis would have to differentiate between introductory and upper-level courses; between departments that do and don't offer multiple courses on a given topic taught from ideologically opposed perspectives; and so on.

647 Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (Oxford: 2008), pp. 116-24.

648 Bertrand Russell, "Free Thought and Official Propaganda" (1922).

649 Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, edited, with an appendix on the "Bertrand Russell Case," by Paul Edwards (New York: 1957), p. 184.

650 One obvious objection, to which there is no obvious answer, is that, on many, perhaps most, topics of academic inquiry, there are more than two combatants (points of view). The question then becomes: *How many roles must the professor play in the name of impartiality?*

651 Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948* (Oxford: 1987), pp. 166-69, 268.

652 Matthew W. Finkin and Robert C. Post, *For the Common Good: Principles of American academic freedom* (New Haven: 2009), p. 100.

653 The dual functions of teaching in higher education are said to be:

> first, to give definite knowledge—reading and writing, language and mathematics, and so on; secondly, to create those mental habits which will enable people to acquire knowledge and form sound judgments for themselves. The first of these we may call information, the second intelligence." (Bertrand Russell, "Free Thought and Propaganda," 1922)

My own opinion is that course readings serve the information function, while the classroom is uniquely equipped for the intelligence function.

654 If invited to deliver a public lecture on a college campus, contrariwise, I see my principal task as to persuade by offering the results of my own process of weighing and balancing. That, after all, is why I was invited: to present *my* viewpoint; others are invited to present theirs. This distinction between my duties in a classroom versus as a guest lecturer might be analogized to the news pages versus the editorial pages of a newspaper.

655 Scott, "Knowledge, Power, and Academic Freedom," in Bilgrami and Cole, p. 78. Other respected contributors to the Bilgrami and Cole volume are equally dismissive of the notion of balance; see the essays by Cole, p. 53 ("we should remember that the proper goal of higher education is enlightenment—not some abstract ideal of 'balance'"), and Moody-Adams, p. 111 ("it is impossible to teach … unless one advocates *something*"—emphasis in original). Isn't encouraging students to use their own mind to think through a controverted question on their own advocating something?

656 Neither of Scott's argumentative premises withstands scrutiny. What makes for a "compelling and inspiring" teacher is not her having "taken positions," but her love of the

subject matter she's teaching and her desire to convey the thrill of these ideas to her students. Further, is it correct that, as one's deepest "political or ethical" convictions maturate, "balancing all sides" plays no part? Coming as it does from a respected left academic, this is a most odd assertion. It's certain that V. I. Lenin was deeply committed to Marxism. But, according to Isaac Deutscher, he "weighed the pros and cons before he committed himself" to Marxism, or, as Leon Trotsky put it, if Lenin embraced the Marxist creed, it was only "after weighing and thinking through each term from every angle." One of the hallmarks of the left tradition used to be that it prized *rational* conviction. (Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed* (New York: 1965), p. 26; Leon Trotsky, *The Young Lenin* (New York: 1972), p. 211)

657 Fully a quarter were just lined up and shot dead in killing fields.

658 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, third edition (New Haven: 2003), vol. 3, pp. 1294-96.

659 https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-holocaust-denial-and-distortion

660 "Netanyahu: Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews," *Haaretz* (21 October 2015).

661 The other two scenarios are: A professor in our biology department wants to devote one class of her course in Genetics to the proposition that people of color are intellectually inferior to white people; A professor in our anthropology department wants to devote one class of his course in Comparative Culture to the proposition that in some cultures women enjoy being beaten and raped. While teaching in Turkey, I replaced the Holocaust denier scenario with: A teacher in the religion department wants to devote one class of his course on Comparative Religion to the proposition that Islam is a terrorist religion.

* The boxed quotes in italics are from *On Liberty*.

662 I would make the simple analogy with a customer telling a Baskin-Robbins employee that vanilla is his favorite flavor:

> But have you tasted the other 30 flavors?
>
> I don't need to. I *love* vanilla. It's soft, it's sweet, it's creamy, it's got that tingly feeling.
>
> Your reasons may be excellent, sir, but if you haven't so much as tasted the other flavors, how can you *prefer* vanilla?

663 I would playfully query the student proclaiming certainty: "Are you God?"

664 U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stevens, *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986).

665 Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering*, second edition (New York: 2003), pp. 41-55.

666 Finkelstein, *Holocaust Industry*, pp. 55-78. A fuller explanation would take account of the ideological utility that gives this nonsense currency (see ibid.).

667 Ibid., pp. 158-61, 236-39.

668 I would liken Mill's point in class to the aesthetic incompleteness of a mosaic when one tile is missing, a jigsaw puzzle when one piece is missing, or a crossword puzzle when one letter is missing. Just as mathematicians speak of an "elegant" proof, so truth has its own aesthetic that is its flawlessness.

669 Christopher Hitchens, "Hitler's Ghost," *Vanity Fair* (June 1996). It was Holocaust deniers, according to Hilberg, who demonstrated that Zyklon-B in its pure form was not sufficiently

lethal to have been used in the gas chambers. Of the suppression of speech opposing U.S. entry in World War I, eminent jurist Zechariah Chafee observed:

> Legal proceedings prove that an opponent makes the best cross-examiner.... Men bitterly hostile to [U.S. participation] may point out evils in its management like the secret treaties, which its supporters have been too busy to unearth. (Zechariah Chafee Jr., *Free Speech in the United States* (Cambridge: 1941), p. 33)

670 "The silencing of an opponent," a modern-day disciple of Mill noted, "sounds alarmingly like an admission that we cannot answer him." (Conrad Russell, *Academic Freedom* (New York: 1993), p. 44)

671 "Is There a New Anti-Semitism? A conversation with Raul Hilberg," *Logos* (Winter-Spring 2007; www.logosjournal.com/issue_6.1-2/hilberg.htm). I vividly recall my own frustration upon reading Holocaust-denier Arthur Butz' *The Hoax of the 20th Century*. He correctly observed, for example, that it was originally alleged that three million Jews were killed at Auschwitz and that six million Jews altogether were killed. But the figure for the number of Jews killed at Auschwitz was subsequently scaled down to one million, yet the total figure was still put at six million. How can this be?, Butz rhetorically asked. I had no answer.

672 "First-ever 50-State Survey on Holocaust Knowledge of American Millennials and Gen Z Reveals Shocking Results," Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany (16 September 2020).

673 In fact, the danger is largely contrived (Finkelstein, *Holocaust Industry*, pp. 68-71), but that's a separate issue. I am addressing here the argument of those who invoke Holocaust denial to clinch the case against balance, yet who also allege that Holocaust denial is rampant.

674 Championing "free discussion [that] will expose the lies and fallacies of propaganda," Zechariah Chafee goes on to observe that "in a country where opinion is suppressed propaganda finds subterranean channels where it cannot be attacked by its opponents." (Chafee, *Free Speech*, p. 155) In class I would point to Germany's ban on the publication of *Mein Kampf*: were it truly committed to averting a resurgence of Nazism, Germany should, on the contrary, make critical study of *Mein Kampf* mandatory.

675 A.A.U.P. 1915 statement; emphasis added.

676 Stanley Fish, "Holocaust Denial and Academic Freedom," *Valparaiso University Law Review* (Summer 2001).

677 The phrase "like the generality..." is from John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*.

678 The phrase "still a prejudice..." is from ibid.

679 Not to be deterred by foolish consistency, Fish on other occasions pays homage to a Millian pursuit of truth: "If anything is a value, truth is, and the … assumption in the classroom as I envision it is that truth, and the seeking of truth, must always be defended … truth is a pre-eminent *academic* value…. What teacher and student are jointly after is knowledge, and the question should never be, 'What do you think?'… The question should be 'What is the truth?' and the answer must stand up against challenges involving (among other things) the quality and quantity of evidence, the cogency of arguments, the soundness of conclusions, and so forth"; "Everything follows from the statement that the pursuit of truth is a—I would say, *the*—central purpose of the university. For the serious embrace of that purpose precludes deciding what the truth is in advance, or ruling out certain accounts of the truth before they have been given a hearing, or making evaluations of those

accounts turn on the known or suspected political affiliations of those who present them." He also praises the academic who doesn't "limit his conclusions to those already reached by the culture," and deplores "an academy whose research results are known in advance because they will always support the policies and reigning values of the state." (Fish, *Save the World*, pp. 38-40, 84, 119; emphases in original)

680 Elsewhere, Fish offers "some precepts that might at least improve the teaching of writing in our colleges and universities." (Fish, *Save the World*, p. 44) *Medice, cura te ipsum* (Physician, heal thyself).

681 Morris Zapp is the preposterous fictional professor in David Lodge's *Small World* modeled after Fish.

682 A.A.U.P., *Freedom in the Classroom* (September-October 2007).

683 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decade of its first century* (New York: 1968), pp. 164-65.

684 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*:

> Where an appeal to the law, and constituted judges, lies open, but the remedy is denied by a manifest perverting of justice, and a barefaced wresting of the laws to protect or indemnify the violence or injuries of some men, or party of men, *there* it is hard to imagine any thing but *a state of war:* for wherever violence is used, and injury done, though by hands appointed to administer justice, it is still violence and injury, however coloured with the name, pretences, or forms of law, the end whereof being to protect and redress the innocent, by an unbiassed application of it, to all who are under it; wherever that is not *bona fide* done, *war is made* upon the sufferers, who having no appeal on earth to right them, they are left to the only remedy in such cases, an appeal to heaven. (emphases in original)

685 As an adjunct faculty, I was forced to accept whatever teaching offer came my way, however ill-prepared I was.

686 Jordan's gloss wasn't—at any rate, from the pedagogical standpoint—very helpful:

> If this belief concerning the Negro had some currency in the English continental colonies, as seems probable, it might easily be regarded as early evidence of a now classic instance of the influence of sexual insecurity upon perception. On the other hand, there may have been genuine basis in fact for the white man's perception, for the few modern studies of the subject have indicated that the penis of the Negro is on average larger than that of the white man, though of course not enough larger to explain entirely what is now almost an article of faith for millions of white men.

The only thing Jordan left out was, *Once you go Black, you'll never go back*. (Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Baltimore: 1969), pp. 28-30, 34-35, 158-59)

687 Henry Louis Gates, "Critical Race Theory and Free Speech," in Louis Menand, ed., *The Future of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: 1996), pp. 146-47. Gates juxtaposes a pair of statements hypothetically addressed to a Black freshman at Stanford University:

> (A) "Levon, if you find yourself struggling in your classes here, you should realize it isn't your fault. It's simply that you're the beneficiary of a disruptive policy of affirmative action that places underqualified, underprepared, and often undertalented black students in demanding educational environments like this one. The policy's egalitarian aims may be well-intentioned but given the fact that aptitude tests place African-Americans almost

a full standard deviation below the mean, even controlling for socioeconomic disparities, they are also profoundly misguided. The truth is, you probably don't belong here, and your college experience will be a long downhill slide."

(B) "Out of my face, jungle bunny."

"Surely there is no doubt," Gates fairly concludes, "which is likely to be more 'wounding' and alienating."

688 See Chapter 1 above.

689 A.A.U.P., 1992.

690 Eminent First Amendment scholar Zechariah Chafee justified the proscription of profanity on the grounds that it did "not form an essential part of any exposition of ideas," and had "a very slight social value as a step toward truth." (Chafee, *Free Speech*, p. 150; see also Thomas I. Emerson and David Haber, "Academic Freedom of the Faculty Member as Citizen," *Law and Contemporary Problems* (Summer: 1963), pp. 554, 570)

691 "A speech code unavoidably implies an institutional competence to distinguish permissible expression of hateful thought from what is proscribed as thoughtless hate. Institutions would also have to justify shielding some, but not other, targets of offensive language—not to political preference, to religious but not to philosophical creed, or perhaps even to some but not to other religious affiliations. Starting down this path creates an even greater risk that groups not originally protected may later demand similar solicitude—demands the institution that began the process of banning some speech is ill-equipped to resist." (A.A.U.P., 1992)

692 See also Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman, *Free Speech on Campus* (New Haven: 2017), pp. 147-50.

693 Frederick Douglass, "*John Brown: An address by Frederick Douglass at the fourteenth anniversary of Storer College, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia,*" in Nicholas Buccola, ed., *The Essential Douglass* (Indianapolis: 2016); W. E. B. Du Bois, *John Brown* (New York: 1962).

694 When Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accepted an invitation to speak at Columbia University, its president, Lee Bollinger, saw it as his "special duty" to introduce the guest speaker by launching a vitriolic assault on him. Helene Cooper, "Ahmadinejad, at Columbia, Parries and Puzzles," *New York Times* (25 September 2007).

695 "No country on earth ... would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders." (Barack Obama during Israel's 2012 attack on Gaza)

696 Amira Hass, "Gantz, Son of Holocaust Survivor, Mentions Bergen-Belsen but Ignores the Camp That Is Gaza," *Haaretz* (3 February 2019).

697 "Ultraleft Tactics in Fighting the Fascists" (2 March 1934). Even when driven into exile and bereft of the instruments of state power, a milquetoast revolutionary, Trotsky was not. To recruit more Blacks to the American branch of the Trotskyists, he recommended that "we should approach them everywhere by advocating that for every lynching they should lynch ten or twenty lynchers." (*Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-1940* (New York: 1977), p. 285)

698 John Dewey, "Academic Freedom" (1902), in Jo Ann Boydston, ed., *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, vol. 2 (Carbondale, IL: 1967), p. 61.

699 The relevant passages read:

It is obvious that academic teachers are under a peculiar obligation to avoid hasty or unverified or exaggerated statements, and to refrain from intemperate or sensational

modes of expression. But, subject to these restraints, it is not, in this committee's opinion, desirable that scholars should be debarred from giving expression to their judgments upon controversial questions, or that their freedom of speech, outside the university, should be limited to questions falling within their own specialties.... And, speaking broadly, it may be said in the words of a nonacademic body already once quoted in a publication of this Association, that "it is neither possible nor desirable to deprive a college professor of the political rights vouchsafed to every citizen."

...

It is … in no sense the contention of this committee that academic freedom implies that individual teachers should be exempt from all restraints as to the matter or manner of their utterances, either within or without the university. Such restraints as are necessary should in the main … be self-imposed, or enforced by the public opinion of the profession. But there may, undoubtedly, arise occasional cases in which the aberrations of individuals may require to be checked by definite disciplinary action. What this report chiefly maintains is that such action cannot with safety be taken by bodies not composed of members of the academic profession. Lay governing boards are competent to judge concerning charges of habitual neglect of assigned duties, on the part of individual teachers, and concerning charges of grave moral delinquency. But in matters of opinion, and of the utterance of opinion, such boards cannot intervene without destroying, to the extent of their intervention, the essential nature of a university—without converting it from a place dedicated to openness of mind, in which the conclusions expressed are the tested conclusions of trained scholars, into a place barred against the access of new light, and precommitted to the opinions or prejudices of men who have not been set apart or expressly trained for the scholar's duties. It is, in short, not the absolute freedom of utterance of the individual scholar, but the absolute freedom of thought, of inquiry, of discussion and of teaching, of the academic profession, that is asserted by this declaration of principles.

700 The passage reads in full:

College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.

701 This clarification was appended as an "Interpretative Comment" in 1970 to the 1940 *Statement of Principles*.

702 This clarification was appended as an "Interpretative Comment" in 1970 to the 1940 *Statement of Principles*.

703 The A.A.U.P.'s *Statement on Professional Ethics* (originally adopted in 1966, revised in 1987, 2009) delineates only these extramural "obligations" of professors: "avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting for their college or university"; "promote conditions of free inquiry and … further public understanding of academic freedom." It makes no mention of "civility" as such.

704 Most of these cases also entailed egregious violations of academic due process, but they

aren't germane to the issues I am considering in this chapter.

705 The fullest treatment of this episode can be found in Thom Weidlich, *Appointment Denied: The inquisition of Bertrand Russell* (Amherst, NY: 2000).

706 Horace M. Kallen, "Behind the Bertrand Russell Case," in John Dewey and Horace M. Kallen (eds.), *The Bertrand Russell Case* (New York: 1972), p. 20. In the popular press, Russell was derided as "a professor of paganism," "a desiccated, divorced, and decadent advocate of sexual immorality," "a polluter of public morals," "an advocate of barnyard morality," and so on. (Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian, and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, edited, with an appendix on the "Bertrand Russell Case," by Paul Edwards (New York: 1957), p. 210; A. D. Irvine, "Bertrand Russell and Academic Freedom," *Journal of the Bertrand Russell Archives* (Summer 1996), pp. 12-13)

707 Weidlich, *Appointment,* p. 14.

708 To be sure, the A.A.U.P. basically sat out the case, while not a few American philosophers opposed Russell's appointment. (Weidlich, *Appointment,* pp. 32-34, 140)

709 John Dewey, "Social Realities Versus Police Court Fictions," in *The Bertrand Russell Case*, p. 72; see also pp. 29, 31, 179, for praise of Russell's character by his supporters.

710 Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals* (New York: 1970). The quoted phrase comes from "Decision of Judge McGeehan," reprinted in full as an appendix in *The Bertrand Russell Case*, p. 219.

711 Dewey, "Social Realities," pp. 65, 70-71.

712 Ibid., pp. 65-67.

713 Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography* (New York: 1998), pp. 474-75; Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, appendix by Edwards, p. 220.

714 *Autobiography*, p. 474. In public statements at the time, Russell tersely defined academic freedom as "simply the independence of duly constituted academic bodies, and their right to make their own appointments," and, in a cognate formulation, "teachers should be chosen for their expertness in the subject they are to teach by other experts." (ibid., p. 475; Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, p. 179; see also Irvine, "Bertrand Russell and Academic Freedom," p. 23n48) He went on to eschew expending class time on any subject except the one on which he was hired to teach, and also defended his right as a free citizen to speak his mind outside of class:

> Even if I were permitted to expound my moral views in the classroom, my own conscience would not allow me to do so, since they have no connection with the subjects which it is my profession to teach, and I think that the classroom should not be used as an opportunity for propaganda on any subject.... The American constitution guarantees to everyone the right to express his opinions whatever these may be. This right is naturally limited by any contract into which the individual may enter which requires him to spend part of his time in occupations other than expressing his opinions. Thus, if a salesman, a postman, a tailor and a teacher of mathematics all happen to hold a certain opinion on a subject unrelated to their work, whatever it may be, none of them should devote to oratory on this subject time which they have been paid to spend in selling, delivering letters, making suits, or teaching mathematics. But they should all equally be allowed to express their opinion freely and without fear of penalties in their spare time, and to think, speak, and behave as they wish, within the law, when they are not engaged in their

professional duties. (Russell, *Autobiography*, p. 475)

715 Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, pp. 252-55; Weidlich, *Appointment,* pp. 35, 158. The *Times* editorialized that Russell "should have had the wisdom to withdraw from the appointment as soon as its harmful results became evident."

716 For example, that the Board of Trustees hired him in violation of city ordinances that mandated he be a U.S. citizen and sit for a competitive civil service examination.

717 "Decision of Judge McGeehan," p. 225. A practicing homosexual back then was liable to 20 years imprisonment in New York State.

718 Ibid., pp. 222-23.

719 Ibid., pp. 222, 225.

720 Alongside many lyrical passages in *Marriage and Morals* on love and sex quoted by his defenders, one could also read: "there ought to be no law whatsoever on the subject of obscene publications"; "it is good for children to see each other and their parents naked whenever it so happens naturally"; "uninhibited civilized people, whether men or women, are generally polygamous in their instincts"; "where a marriage is fruitful and both parties to it are reasonable and decent, the expectation ought to be that it will be lifelong, but not that it will exclude other sex relations"; "I do not think that prostitution can be abolished wholly"; "I think that all sex relations which do not involve children should be regarded as a purely private affair, and that if a man and a woman choose to live together without having children, that should be no one's business but their own"; "I should not hold it desirable that either a man or a woman should enter upon the serious business of marriage … without having had previous sexual experience"; "no doubt the ideal father is better than none, but many fathers are so far from ideal that their non-existence might be a positive advantage to children"; "adultery in itself should not, to my mind, be a ground of divorce. Unless people are restrained by inhibitions or strong moral scruples, it is very unlikely that they will go through life without occasionally having strong impulses to adultery." (pp. 116, 139, 142, 148, 165-66, 196-97, 230)

721 Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, appendix by Edwards, pp. 220, 239-40. See also Carleton Washburne, "The Case as a School Administrator," in *The Bertrand Russell Case*, p. 159.

722 Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, pp. 110-11: "Homosexuality between men … is illegal in England…. And yet, every person who has taken the trouble to study the subject knows that this law is the effect of a barbarous and ignorant superstition, in favor of which no rational argument of any sort or kind can be advanced." Edwards quotes this very passage in his appendix to *Why I Am Not a Christian* and then, bizarrely, goes on to say, "Russell is not even criticizing existing laws"!

723 Weidlich, *Appointment*, p. 131; Philip Ironside, *The Social and Political Thought of Bertrand Russell: The development of an aristocratic liberalism* (Cambridge: 1996), p. 51; Russell, *Autobiography*, pp. 319-20.

724 Dewey, "Social Realities," p. 69.

725 Compare his casual, nonjudgmental reference to homosexual couplings at Cambridge University in his *Autobiography*, p. 71.

726 "Decision of Justice McGeehan," *The Bertrand Russell Case*, p. 218.

727 It is possible to make out a nuance between a professor's own moral bearing, which might be austere, and his opinions, which might be libertine, that would abet Russell's case, except that it was also held against him that he had been married and divorced many times, leaving aside his numberless extramarital dalliances. Ray Monk's two-volume biography of Russell documents these liaisons in ponderous detail, to the point of satiating even the most salacious of tastes.

728 This account is based on A.A.U.P., "Academic Freedom and Tenure, The University of Illinois" (1963).

729 Whereas it had condemned the "language, tone, and *content* of the letter" (emphasis added) in the body of its report, the Board of Trustees denied in its conclusions that Koch had been taken to task for the content of his opinions but, instead, it purported that he was only chastised "because of the manner in which he expressed those views in his letter. We do not consider that letter as a 'responsible' and proper expression of the views stated in it."

730 The purview of Committee A is "academic freedom and tenure."

731 It cited at length a passage from Mill's *On Liberty*, to which I will return presently.

732 The Ad Hoc Committee's report is not entirely clear on this point, but it apparently intends to say "academic responsibility" in regard to form, since the university denied that Koch had been sanctioned for the letter's content.

733 The Ad Hoc Committee maintained that the letter was not intemperate, and even if it were wanting in reasonableness, that couldn't be grounds for disciplinary action; and that its rhetorical techniques do "not seem to go beyond customary limits in the use of overstatement and ridicule."

734 Recall that the university ultimately denied that Koch had been disciplined on account of the letter's content.

735 One member of Committee A, in a separate opinion, criticized the vagueness of the majority opinion on this point and signaled the dangers it presented:

> It does not answer the pertinent question: "What specific expression of opinion by a teacher violates the standard of academic responsibility and thereby warrants suspension or dismissal?"…. To speak of "academic responsibility" as a standard or test for dismissal because a teacher has expressed an unpopular opinion without anchoring it to unmistakable particulars is to waver on a floating bog of semantics…. Setting up in the exercise of free speech a special standard of "academic responsibility" for teachers, not binding on other citizens as a standard for suspension or dismissal is to open a Pandora's box of all the coercive and compulsive crusades of sectarian, political, and economic pressure groups together with consequent attempts at dismissal by administrators who are unable to resist the public pressure engendered by such groups whose causes often contain more heat than light.

736 During my own tenure case, I was certainly sensitive to such concerns. However, as the DePaul administration refused to meet with me, it never became a subject of consideration. Instead, DePaul orchestrated a Stasi-like campaign of whispering and rumor-mongering so as to mortify me into quitting. It was only when I threatened to divulge the squalid and sordid details to Jennifer Howard at the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that these pious Vincentians more or less desisted. (I was formally denied tenure on the grounds that I had

violated DePaul's sublime Vincentian mission.)

737 Washburne, "The Case as a School Administrator Sees It," in *Bertrand Russell Case*, pp. 161-62.

738 The A.A.U.P. defined "extramural speech" as speech addressed to the "larger community" and concerned with "social, political, economic, or other interests." See its publication *Protecting an Independent Faculty Voice: Academic freedom after* Garcetti v. Ceballos (2009).

739 Scott Jaschik, "What Larry Summers Said," *Insider Higher Ed* (18 February 2005).

740 Summers speculated that the underrepresentation of women in science faculties could be explained by innate differences in ability, while Hunt lamented that science labs incite lustful thoughts, and "when you criticize" women in labs, "they cry."

741 One can, of course, rejoin that both Summers and Hunt technically resigned, that neither was sacked from a tenured teaching position (Summers was an administrator, Hunt held an honorary teaching post), and so on, but these are distinctions without a difference to the point at hand: both lost their positions on account of their utterances, regardless of whether they were intramural or extramural and notwithstanding their demonstrated professional-academic competence.

742 Black Power advocate Stokely Carmichael famously declared that "the position of women in The Movement is prone." (It was perhaps said in jest.)

743 A University of Chicago neuroscientist posted on his Facebook page a more benign version of such a loutish remark, complaining that "an unusually high concentration of unattractive women" attend neuroscience conferences. The posting elicited an outpouring of public condemnation, but the professor apparently did not have to endure institutional reprisals. For an exceptionally obtuse defense of this posting, see Richard A. Shweder, "To Follow the Argument Where It Leads," in Akeel Bilgrami and Jonathan Cole (eds.), *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?* (New York: 2015), pp. 233-34n29.

744 By not squarely addressing this distinction, Mill gets trapped in inconsistency. He promotes eccentricity, yet also avows: "We have a right, and it may be our duty, to caution others against him, if we think his example or conversation likely to have a pernicious effect on those with whom he associates"; "There are many acts which, being directly injurious only to the agents themselves, ought not to be legally interdicted, but which, if done publicly, are a violation of good manners and, coming thus within the category of offenses against others, may rightfully be prohibited"; "It still remains unrecognized that to bring a child into existence without a fair prospect of being able, not only to provide food for its body, but instruction and training for its mind is a moral crime, both against the unfortunate offspring and against society; and that if the parent does not fulfill this obligation, the State ought to see it fulfilled at the charge, as far as possible, of the parent." But isn't it eccentrics who are typically said to have a "pernicious effect" on others, to violate "good manners," and to be morally unfit parents? In other words, if Mill encouraged eccentricity, he simultaneously upheld society's right to variously constrain it. Although he never made explicit the distinction, Mill implicitly acknowledged that not all eccentricity should be encouraged, indeed, pathological forms of it should be censured and sanctioned. He, alas, never tackled the critical question, how to distinguish one from the other.

745 The irony is, many of Russell's social opinions that didn't outrage then but fell within the

mainstream, do in retrospect appear outrageous. For example, in *Marriage and Morals*, he wrote: "during [the nineteenth century] the British stock was peopling large parts of the world previously inhabited by a few savages"; "one can generally tell whether a man is a clever man or a fool by the shape of his head"; "The objections to [sterilization] which one naturally feels are, I believe, not justified. Feeble-minded women, as everyone knows, are apt to have enormous numbers of illegitimate children, all, as a rule, wholly worthless to the community.... It is quite clear that the number of idiots, imbeciles, and feeble-minded could, by such measures, be enormously diminished"; "In extreme cases there can be little doubt of the superiority of one race to another. North America, Australia and New Zealand certainly contribute more to the civilization of the world than they would do if they were still peopled by aborigines. It seems on the whole fair to regard negroes as on the average inferior to white men, although for work in the tropics they are indispensable, so that their extermination (apart from questions of humanity) would be highly undesirable." (pp. 245, 256, 258-59, 266)

746 This section is based on the A.A.U.P.'s report, "The University of California at Los Angeles" (1971).

747 It became a matter of dispute whether she was hired to teach for one or two academic years.

748 Beginning in 1940, the Board of Regents of the University of California periodically resolved that membership in the Communist Party was "incompatible with membership in the faculty of a State University." As a result of the faculty lawsuit, the state court ruled that this resolution was no longer valid law.

749 Formally, the Board of Regents purported that her Party membership did not play a part in its decision. However, two dissenting members of the Board asserted that, on the contrary, her membership *was* the "determinative" factor while her extramural statements were just a "transparently improvised cover." The A.A.U.P. judiciously concluded:

> What role, then, did knowledge of Miss Davis's Communist Party membership play in the action of the Board? It would be unwarranted to say that this awareness was the sole reason for the Regental action.... Nor is it warranted to say that the reasons stated by the Regents are a mere pretext for a preconceived determination to get rid of a Communist faculty member. On the other hand, if Miss Davis had never acknowledged Communist Party membership and had never become an object of Board attention on that account, her political statements would not have precipitated intervention by the Regents. The Regents' knowledge of Miss Davis's Communist Party membership probably, as some Regents' comments indicate, colored their later reaction to her public speeches and predisposed them to take an adverse decision in response to those speeches.

750 Along the way, other manifestly contrived pretexts were thrown in, such as her lack of progress on her dissertation and budgetary concerns.

751 On a related note, the Ad Hoc Committee found no evidence that Davis used the classroom to "indoctrinate" her students. Although she was quoted as insisting that education was "inherently political" and that "I can't and I won't keep my political opinions out of the classroom," and although she was anything but a shrinking violet at rallies, as a teacher Davis was apparently a model of pedagogical objectivity:

> One of the most striking characteristics of Miss Davis's conduct is the very sharp

difference between her classroom behavior and her public statements.… The evidence submitted to us shows that her teaching has been unexceptionable; in her dealings with students she has maintained an objective and rather restrained posture. Her public speeches, on the other hand, have been characterized by a notable lack of restraint and the use of, to say the least, extravagant and inflammatory rhetoric.

752 Davis alleged that a Supreme Court decision in her favor resulted from mass popular protests, which was apparently not the case.

753 Apropos her rhetorical style at political rallies, the A.A.U.P. report noted:

Miss Davis, who in her classroom and in her interview with the present investigating committee has shown herself entirely capable of thoughtful and soft-spoken discourse, explained her platform terminology by reference to her personal background, and to the needs of communicating to her audiences a view of reality which inheres in the choice of style and would not be conveyed by "respectable" synonyms. When asked how she would judge this style if used publicly by her own professors or, now, her older colleagues, she replied that it would depend on whether it appeared as a natural expression of the person's background or as a false note, adopted only as a tactic.

754 Likewise, the U.C.L.A. Ad Hoc Committee noted that "regrettably, the use of lurid imagery and the excessive resort to hyperbole have become the hallmark of extremist rhetoric. Its use is by no means confined to the militant left. Compared with some of the writings of Classics Professor Revilo P. Oliver of the University of Illinois in the John Birch publication, *American Opinion*, for example, most of what Miss Davis has said in public seems rather bland." (Oliver was a Classics professor and an ultra-rightwing crackpot in thrall to bizarre conspiracy theories.)

755 Zechariah Chafee, *Free Speech in the United States* (Cambridge: 1941), p. 43.

756 The A.A.U.P. defined "fitness" in these terms:

What is required by the concept "fitness for one's position?" Most obviously, it means the capability and the willingness to carry out the duties of the position. First among these, for most academic personnel, are the duties of a competent and responsible teacher.… Depending on his discipline, rank, or assignment, and the practices of the institution, a faculty member's position may involve other responsibilities, in research, in advising students, in sharing departmental chores or administrative duties, and the like. To meet the A.A.U.P.'s standard of unfitness, then, the faculty member's shortcoming must be shown to bear some identified relation to his capacity or willingness to perform the responsibilities, broadly conceived, to his students, to his colleagues, to his discipline, or to the functions of his institution, that pertain to his assignment. The concept cannot be reduced to a generalized judgment of "unsuitability" at large. A.A.U.P. standards of responsibility identify objectionable features in extramural speech, and their presence in any serious degree is prima facie evidence to trigger an inquiry into the speaker's fitness for an academic position, but it does not by itself establish unfitness.

757 On a personal note, Angela Davis was a heroine of mine growing up. In an unpublished memoir, I recalled:

In high school, I had defended the Black Panthers and posted *Free Angela Davis* Christmas cards to my friends. Black, beautiful, brilliant and a Communist, not to mention sporting the "biggest Afro this side of the Zambezi" (*Time*), Angela was my first political idol and teenage crush. Later in life, whenever I seized on a new cause, my mother sneeringly inquired, "Angela Davis?"

On perusing the record of her academic freedom case for this chapter, it was gratifying to find that I had—in this instance, at any rate—chosen wisely in my youth.

758 Unless otherwise indicated, this account is based on Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure (C.A.F.T.) of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Report on the Investigation into the Matter of Steven Salaita" (2014), and A.A.U.P., "Academic Freedom and Tenure: The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign" (2015).

759 He was also accused of being an antisemite, which—per usual when this charge is leveled—was politically motivated, self-serving, baseless, fatuous, and idiotic.

760 Just as the storm broke, the university administration stated: "Faculty have a wide range of scholarly and political views, and we recognize the freedom of speech rights of all of our employees."

761 She denied the validity of the distinction between extramural and classroom utterances: "The manner in which you speak reflects on how welcoming you would be as a faculty member."

762 Eventually, 41 U.I.U.C. department chairs and program heads called on the administration to reinstate Salaita.

763 In his defense, Salaita noted that during the same period he also tweeted:

> I absolutely have empathy for Israeli civilians who are harmed. Because I'm capable of empathy, I deeply oppose colonization and ethnocracy.
>
> It's a beautiful thing to see our Jewish brothers and sisters around the world deploring #Israel's brutality in #Gaza.
>
> My stand is fundamentally one of acknowledging and countering the horror of antisemitism.
>
> #ISupportGaza because I believe that Jewish and Arab children are equal in the eyes of God.

Salaita, however, implausibly characterized these and other homilies to Semitic brotherhood as "a representative sampling of my Twitter feed" (Steven Salaita, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the limits of academic freedom* (Chicago: 2015), p. 9).

764 Salaita's case also posed thorny procedural and due process issues not considered here, such as whether or not he was a full-fledged faculty member at the time of his termination, and thus entitled to the full complement of academic protections. The U.I.U.C. university administration said no, C.A.F.T. said no and yes, the A.A.U.P. said yes.

765 According to U.I.U.C. statutes, the maximum an administration could do to register disapproval of a faculty's extramural speech was to "publicly dissociate" from it.

766 It asserted that certain of Salaita's published remarks gave rise to "legitimate questions," such as whether his "passionate political commitments have blinded him to critical distinctions, caused lapses in analytic rigor, or led to distortions of facts." This reasoning perplexes. It implies that passionate commitment and scholarly objectivity are mutually exclusive. But hasn't the impetus behind many a scholarly undertaking been a passionate political commitment to achieving Justice by bringing the Truth to light?

767 One telling example deserves full quotation:

> A ... stark contrast may be drawn between the Salaita case and the administration's treatment of a long-time faculty member, Professor Robert Weissberg, who regularly advocated principles of white supremacy. Weissberg, now retired from the Department of

Political Science, was a frequent speaker at meetings of American Renaissance, widely considered a white supremacist group. According to an official summary of one such conference in 2012, he "pointed out that there are still many "Whitopias" in America and … many ways to keep them white, such as zoning that requires large houses and a cultural ambiance of classical music and refined demeanor that repels undesirables. This approach to maintaining whiteness has the advantage that people can make a living catering to whites in their enclaves." In an earlier essay, he wrote, "Black-white co-existence is a little like having an incurable medical condition." And he added, "Blacks generally have a well-deserved reputation for hair-triggered collective violence." The administration took no action against him, reflecting a tolerance for offensive extramural expression not witnessed in the Salaita case, although it is unclear whether anyone outside the university had ever attempted to exert pressure on the administration to take such action.

See also John K. Wilson, "The Racist Professor at the University of Illinois," *Academe Blog* (4 September 2014). For another example of U.I.U.C.'s double standard, see "In the Matter of Dr. Kenneth Howell, Report of a Subcommittee of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign" (2010).

768 For Salaita's convoluted, wholly unconvincing extenuation of this tweet, see Salaita, *Uncivil Rites*, pp. 10-11, 13. Among other things, he purports that his message provoked outrage because it hurt "colonial self-esteem. Israelis want to be accepted by Palestinians, even loved…. My tweet, in its ambivalent crudeness, rejects that possibility." Whatever.

769 In the *Leo F. Koch* case, the A.A.U.P. stated that "whatever tarnish rubs off on the university by reason of an immoderate statement of an offensive idea, would hardly be greater than that accruing from a consummately polished, and hence more persuasive, statement of the same idea." This too might often be but is not always the case.

770 See also Joan Scott, "The New Thought Police," *Nation* (15 April 2015), and Joseph Massad, "Academic Civility and Its Discontents," *Electronic Intifada* (9 October 2014).

771 Salaita, *Uncivil Rites*, p. 41.

772 Ibid., p. 42. Salaita is not altogether consistent on this point. Elsewhere he writes that "to support Palestine in the American polity automatically entails an act of radicalism, no matter how measured or demonstrable the point of view. It is *necessarily* uncivil, no matter how cordial the appeal"; "according to the commonplaces of respectable political thought, criticism of Israel is *necessarily* intemperate no matter the tone and language by which it is conducted." (ibid., pp. 105, 117-18; emphases added) Indeed, consistency is not Salaita's strong suit. Right after railing against arguments that "totalize" and "essentialize" groups of people, he writes: "Arabs and Muslims, *on the whole*, are skeptical of formulations that totalize communities…. Arab and Muslim organizing generally avoids the pratfalls [sic] of essentialism, an avoidance common to *all people of color* in the United States." (ibid. p. 133; emphases added)

773 Ibid., pp. 2, 12, 56, 62, 89, 188, 190-91; see also pp. 49, 52-53, 57, 58. Elsewhere, he purports that "Middle East Studies is embroiled in controversies almost exclusively involving the Palestinians; those controversies, initiated mainly by disgruntled Zionists, are inane morally, but have the practical value—from the standpoint of Israel's supporters—of inhibiting serious analysis of Israeli colonization and Palestinian resistance." Steven Salaita, "The Ethics of Intercultural Approaches to Indigenous Studies," *International*

Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008). If the Middle East Studies Association (M.E.S.A.) is at all indicative of the current state of Middle East Studies—how can it not be?—the claim that it has been "inhibiting serious analysis…" borders on the delusional. Just a cursory glance at M.E.S.A.'s presidents the past quarter century gives the lie to it.

774 Salaita, *Uncivil Rites*, p. 44.

775 It cannot be doubted that U.I.U.C. dismissed Steven Salaita on spurious grounds. It soon emerged, however, that Salaita's supporters were defending not just his professional rights but also his scholarly competence. This act of solidarity went one step too far. It was disingenuous and an abdication of scholarly responsibility. Indeed, it was one more lamentable chapter in the history of the political left sacrificing Truth at the altar of The Cause, and of guilt-tripped white leftists proving their radical bona fides by groveling before self-serving, self-promoting, self-anointed People of Color. Of Salaita's account of his tenure ordeal, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the limits of academic freedom*, respected political theorist Corey Robin raved: "It is by turns tender, thoughtful, enraging, and often laugh-out-loud funny. Many books feel like a duty; this was sheer pleasure." When reputable radical scholars who should and *do* know better sing paeans to Salaita's scholarship, they betray not only their professional but also their political calling. In an earlier draft of this manuscript, I documented in detail my severe misgivings about Salaita's so-called scholarship. But, as he has already suffered a thousand blows, it seemed graceless to deliver another, so I have deleted that section.

776 His starting salary was $85,000, plus a "start-up and discretionary fund package of $10,000," plus "funds up to $30,000 to help initiate, bolster and sustain the research goals of faculty," while his teaching load was formally two courses per semester, but with a scheduled load reduction because "you are a scholar in [sic] the height of your productivity." It might be argued that, if Salaita was the unanimous pick, it was because he was by a wide margin the most qualified candidate, but in that case it calls into question the substantiality of the discipline.

777 C.A.F.T. stated that "we believe that the Chancellor, the President, and the Trustees acted sincerely out of a commitment to inclusiveness." It's plausible that the Chancellor was genuinely shocked by the tone of Salaita's posts on Twitter, but it's almost certainly the case that she was primarily responding to the pressures exerted on her by the Israel lobby, including alumni donors.

778 Former A.A.U.P. national president and U.I.U.C. faculty member Cary Nelson defended the administration's decision on the flimsy pretext that Salaita would not have made a desirable "colleague" or played a positive role during "Israel Apartheid Week." In the course of his vendetta against Salaita and BDS, Nelson, who received a PhD in English from the University of Rochester, reinvented himself as a maven on the Israel-Palestine conflict. He even summoned forth the chutzpah to coauthor "The History of Israel," based on a handful of secondary sources. This bursting windbag disparaged Salaita's scholarship blissfully oblivious to his own absurd claims to scholarly authority. (Cary Nelson, "An Appointment to Reject," *Inside Higher Ed* (8 August 2014); Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm (eds.), *The Case against Academic Boycotts of Israel* (New York: 2015), pp. 385-438; Cary

Nelson, "Steven Salaita's Scholarly Record and the Problem of His Appointment," *A.A.U.P. Journal of Academic Freedom*, 2015, vol. 6)

779 Salaita, *Uncivil Rites*, pp. 124, 142-44.

780 The A.A.U.P. articulated this nuance in the Salaita case:

> Institutional sanctions imposed for extramural utterances can be a violation of academic freedom even when the utterances themselves fall short of the standards of the profession; for it is central to that freedom that the faculty member, when speaking as a citizen, "should be free from institutional censorship or discipline" except insofar as his behavior is shown, on the whole record, to be incompatible with fitness for his position.

781 I therefore exclude from consideration the issue of "incitement of misconduct" ("Advisory Letter from the Washington Office," *A.A.U.P. Bulletin*, Winter 1963), as well as the requirement that, in a professor's extramural speech, "when he speaks or acts as a private person, he avoids creating the impression that he speaks or acts for his college or university" (A.A.U.P., "Statement of Professional Ethics," 1966). The latter transgression has rarely come up in academic freedom cases (if any doubt lingers, it quickly becomes obvious that the offending professor does not speak for the university), while the former transgression did figure in morality cases (both Russell and Koch stood accused of inciting indecent, illegal sexual conduct), but not in cases of political incivility, on which I am focusing here.

782 1966, revised 1987, 2009.

783 The A.A.U.P.'s rendering of her controversial remarks read:

> Miss Davis has repeatedly singled out as an "exploiter" of academic freedom Professor Arthur Jensen, University of California, Berkeley, because "he is maintaining that it can be scientifically demonstrated that black people are genetically inferior to white people.... He's maintaining that he has the right to talk about things like the genetic inferiority of black men."

784 Earlier in this document, the A.A.U.P. stated:

> It is obvious that the several admonitions about professional conduct espoused by the A.A.U.P. carry different importance; for instance, a professor would hardly be disciplined for failing to carry into action the charge "to further public understanding of academic freedom," and the violation could hardly be more than venial if sometimes he does not show "respect for the opinions of others" especially if he can demonstrate that these are poorly founded.

785 Disingenuousness is a hallmark of this genre of research. When Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray published *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and class structure*, which posited the mental inferiority of Black people, it provoked bedlam in intellectual circles. Murray feigned shock that critics focused on this finding, which, he said, occupied just a small portion of the book. As if he didn't anticipate and relish this reaction.

786 It might be argued that such research would prove that investment in social programs can only go so far to meliorate the condition of Black people. But, omitting as it does a thousand argumentative links, the nexus between Jensen's research and such a conclusion is tenuous at best.

787 Here I also speak from personal experience. I still vividly recall how my childhood friend's educated parents started citing Jensen's research when it was first published by and benefited from the imprimatur of *Harvard Education Review*.

788 A related but separate question would be whether, as a practical matter, colleagues in the same department need to be mutually respectful if the bureaucratic machinery is to smoothly function. The fact is, however, that academia is rife with inflated egos combined with puny intellects, which makes for hypersensitive souls recoiling at every slight, real or imagined. It is also home to petty but vicious infighting (cabals, backstabbing, etc.). The upshot is, mutual respect almost never even enters the equation in departmental life, whereas mutual contempt is a constant. If a department survives (quite a few don't; they become dysfunctional, the fateful last step being academic receivership), it's not because of mutual respect, but mutual duplicity, whereby everyone grins at while loathing each other. I will concede this depiction is tendentious, but not more.

789 Thomas I. Emerson and David Haber, "Academic Freedom of the Faculty Member as Citizen," *Law and Contemporary Problems* (Summer: 1963), p. 549; see also pp. 553-54.

790 It is not an open question whether Dershowitz is a serial prevaricator. His numberless, egregious misrepresentations of uncontroversial facts have been copiously documented. See Norman G. Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the misuse of anti-Semitism and the abuse of history* (Berkeley, 2005; updated paperback edition, 2008); Howard Friel, *Chomsky and Dershowitz: On endless war and the end of civil liberties* (Northampton, MA: 2014). If it is contended that no proof has been adduced that he *knowingly* lied, then, in light of the prodigiousness of his falsehoods, the only other possibility is that he is a pathological liar, in which case it would be hard to justify his employment at an—indeed, the most revered—academic institution, the motto of which is *Veritas*.

791 "Advisory Letters from the Washington Office," *A.A.U.P. Bulletin* (Winter 1963), pp. 393-94. The 1915 A.A.U.P. statement of principles declared:

> The claim to freedom of teaching is made in the interest of the integrity and of the progress of scientific inquiry; it is, therefore, only those who carry on their work in the temper of the scientific inquirer who may justly assert this claim. The liberty of the scholar within the university to set forth his conclusions, be they what they may, is conditioned by their being conclusions gained by a scholar's method and held in a scholar's spirit; that is to say, they must be the fruits of competent and patient and sincere inquiry, and they should be set forth with dignity, courtesy, and temperateness of language.

792 Dewey, "Academic Freedom," pp. 58-60.

793 See for example: www.mit.edu/activities/thistle/v9/9.06/8nuremberg.html; https://chomsky.info/1990____-2/; https://www.juancole.com/2014/05/condoleezza-withdraws-commencement.html

794 See also Joan W. Scott, "Knowledge, Power, and Academic Freedom," in Bilgrami and Cole, *Who's Afraid of Academic Freedom?*, p. 70.

795 Dewey, "Academic Freedom," p. 60.

796 Harry Kalven, Jr., *A Worthy Tradition: Freedom of speech in America* (New York: 1988), pp. xxiv, 442.

797 Robert C. Post, "Academic Freedom and the 'Intifada Curriculum,'" *Academe* (May-June 2003).

798 Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: 1947), p. 44.

799 Ibid., p. 21.

800 Jerrold Seigal, *Marx's Fate: The shape of a life* (Princeton: 1978), p. 329.

801 Karl Marx, *Capital: A critique of political economy*, volume one (New York: 1976), pp. 175n35 (Bastiat), 339n13 (Young), 314n3 (Say, Roscher), 342 ("vampire-like"), 569n37 (MacCulloch), 575 (Ganilh), 654 (Mill), 926 ("dripping").

802 Philip S. Foner, *When Karl Marx Died: Comments in 1883* (New York: 1973), pp. 38-40.

803 Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, p. 104.

804 John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (New York: 1989), p. 57.

805 Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. intervention in Central America and the struggle for peace* (Boston: 1985), p. 8.

806 An eloquent passage in the A.A.U.P.'s 1915 statement of principles captures the salience of a professor's purity of purpose in the expectations of students:

> No man can be a successful teacher unless he enjoys the respect of his students, and their confidence in his intellectual integrity. It is clear, however, that this confidence will be impaired if there is suspicion on the part of the student that the teacher is not expressing himself fully or frankly, or that college and university teachers in general are a repressed and intimidated class who dare not speak with that candor and courage which youth always demands in those whom it is to esteem. The average student is a discerning observer, who soon takes the measure of his instructor. It is not only the character of the instruction but also the character of the instructor that counts; and if the student has reason to believe that the instructor is not true to himself, the virtue of the instruction as an educative force is incalculably diminished. There must be in the mind of the teacher no mental reservation. He must give the student the best of what he has and what he is.

807 In its report on the Angela Davis case, the A.A.U.P. observed that

> the position of contemporary radical rhetoric needs to be considered in relation to standards of academic responsibility. Students of this rhetoric have described it as seeking to express an uncompromising confrontation of the rhetorical adversary, indifferent to the reasoned persuasion and eventual accommodation sought by other conventions of public address.

808 Norman G. Finkelstein, "Hitchens as Model Apostate," in Simon Cottee and Thomas Cushman (eds.), *Christopher Hitchens and His Critics: Terror, Iraq and the Left* (New York: 2008).

809 Dewey, "Academic Freedom," p. 59.

810 To be sure, Mill did not dispute that "the manner of asserting an opinion, even though it be a true one, may be very objectionable, and may justly incur severe censure." What he opposed were legal or formal sanctions.

811 Put otherwise: If an atheist were to launch a broadside against organized religion, he would probably lose intellectual ground, because such intemperate language would only confirm the low opinion in which he's already held; whereas, if a defender of organized religion were to launch an intemperate attack on proponents of atheism, he would, by dint of the compound force of an enraged public opinion standing behind him, more likely than not trounce his opponent and deprive him of a fair hearing. Hence, to ensure that both sides gain access to the marketplace of ideas, it's incumbent, if a choice be made, to curb the intemperateness of those propounding the conventional opinion.

812 Not least, his skewering of philosophers.

813 Russell, *Autobiography*, pp. 465-66.

814 See *Conclusion to Part II* below.

815 Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering*, second paperback edition (New York: 2003), pp. 44, 45n8.

816 See *Conclusion to Part I* in this book.

817 Tova Reich, *My Holocaust* (New York: 2007).

818 Avraham Burg, *The Holocaust Is Over, We Must Rise from Its Ashes* (New York: 2008). ("Shoah industry" at pp. 4-5)

819 Omer Bartov, "Did Punchcards Fuel the Holocaust?," *Newsday* (25 March 2001).

820 Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah*, p. xlv.

821 Ari Shavit, "Survival of the Fittest," *Haaretz* (9 January 2004).

822 Norman G. Finkelstein, *Knowing Too Much: Why the American Jewish Romance with Israel is coming to an end* (New York: 2012), pp. 253-297.

823 The passage read in full:

> The footnotes are of extraordinary length. As a general rule, I think footnotes are for references. They should only rarely contain substantive materials. Here, the footnotes are perhaps longer than the text itself. If nothing else, it makes the reading of the article very difficult, as one is constantly being bounced back and forth, like a ping pong ball, between text and footnote. Good rule of thumb: if it is important enough to be included in the article, put it in the main text. If it is not that important, leave it out altogether. The footnote is a very unsatisfactory half-way house for tangents and digressions.

This was the heart of my "peer criticism." Good rule of thumb: if you aspire to be an overpaid windbag, teach law.

824 I exclude the natural sciences, as well as allegations of scholarly fraud when they have been annexed to a political agenda such as what happened in the David Abraham case. (Jon Wiener, *Historians in Trouble: Plagiarism, fraud and politics in the ivory tower* (New York: 2005), chap. 5)

825 Edward Said, "Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The potentate and the traveler," in Louis Menand (ed.), *The Future of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: 1996), p. 216.

826 The phrase comes from Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, which chastised white ministers waxing more indignant at the incivility of nonviolent resisters than at the "injustices inflicted on the Negro."

827 Several DePaul students went on a protracted hunger strike to protest the decision. I wish to acknowledge them here: Daniel Klimek, Victor Lang, Evan Lorendo, Peter Srouji, Kathryn Weber, Brian West. I also wish to acknowledge the support of DePaul faculty members Gil Gott and Azza Layton as well as my attorney in the case, Lynne Bernabei, and Allan Nairn.

828 www.democracynow.org/2007/5/9/it_takes_an_enormous_amount_of

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